

Tuesday December 17 1996

Table with exchange rates for various countries including Abu Dhabi, Amsterdam, Australia, etc.

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 46,736

Slow, rude, secretive, antiquated ...

What hope for the Home Office?

G2 with European weather

The perils of outing a TV star

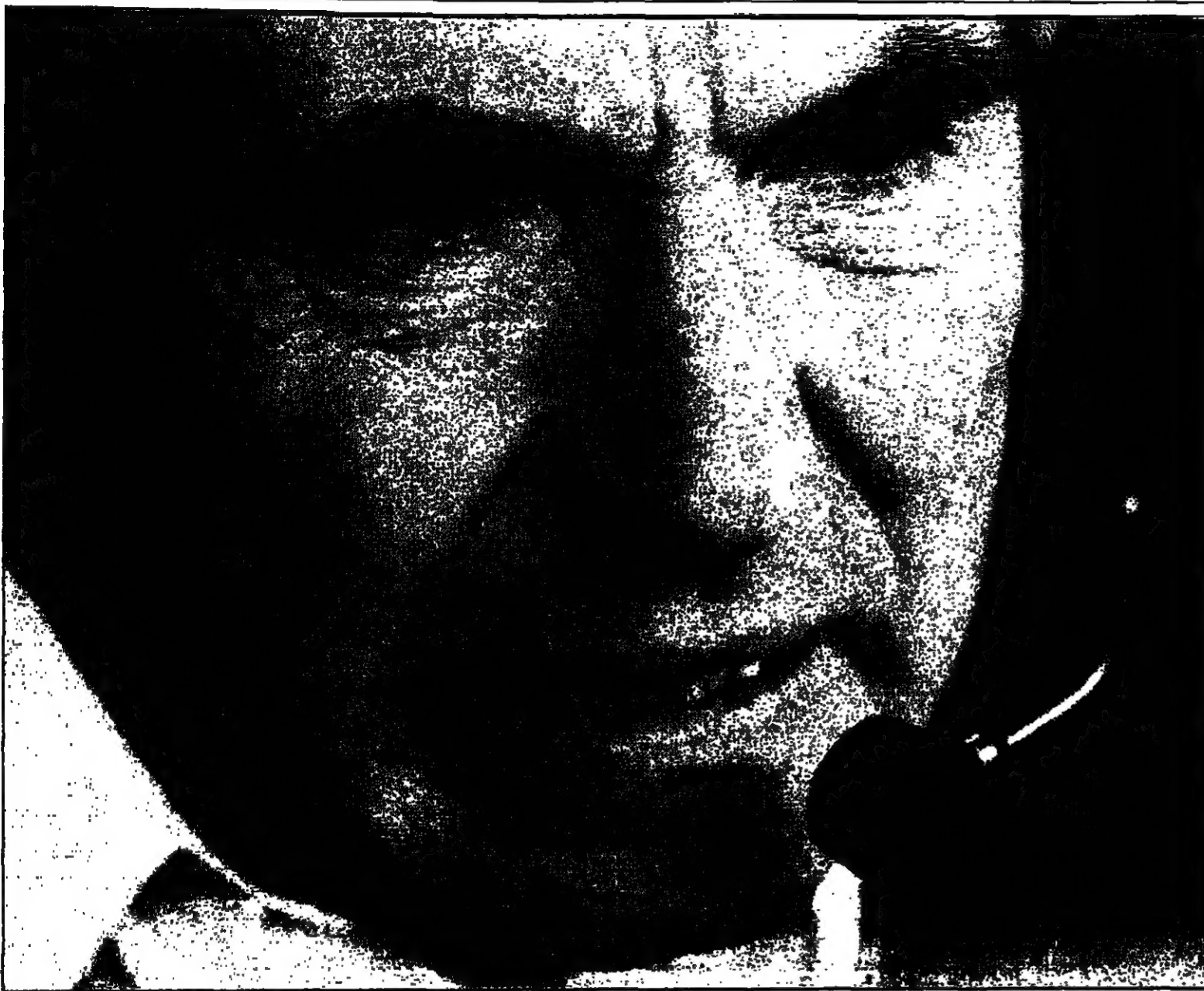
Is she or isn't she?



Education

Why do so many young doctors leave medicine?

G2 pages 10/11



Frank Williams, the owner of Formula One's dominant team, who could face up to seven years in jail if convicted

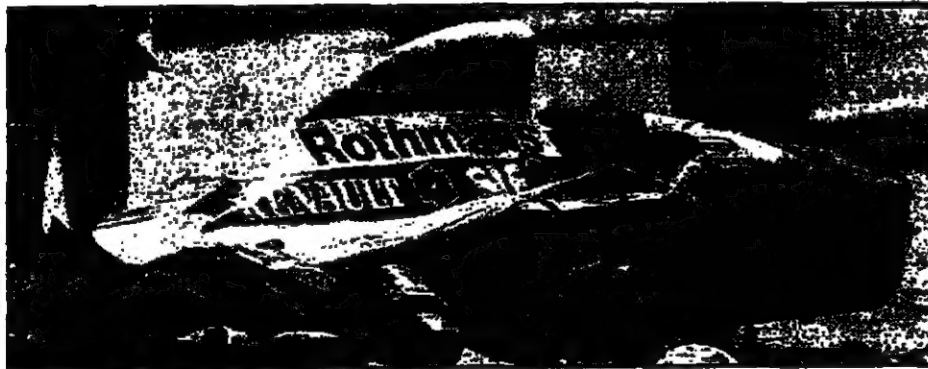
PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE HEWITT

Williams on Senna death crash charge

Italian trial to follow inquiry into steering fault

Nick Varley and Alan Henry

FRANK Williams, owner of the eponymous team that has dominated the Formula One motor racing championship in recent years, is to stand trial for the manslaughter of three-time world champion Ayrton Senna.



The wreckage after three-time world champion Ayrton Senna's fatal crash

San Marino Grand Prix at Monza, will also go on trial in a case due to start in Italy early next year.

crash in which Senna, a Brazilian, suffered fatal head injuries. The team said in a statement from its Oxfordshire headquarters: "Williams is disappointed at the content of the summons. We do not believe the charges are well-founded and intend to do all that is necessary to defend our position and contest the charges."

circumstances of the crash. Data from Senna's on-board computer showed he braked sharply as soon as he veered away from the racing line, cutting nearly 60mph from his 190mph speed in less than a second.

on changes to the steering system. Pictures of the wreckage showed the steering wheel, still attached to part of the steering rod, lying on the ground outside the cockpit.

It was thought the driver, aged 34, asked for the changes to the steering wheel so it was lower in the cockpit and he could get a better view of his instrument panel.

Williams have stressed that his data shows the steering wheel was working until the moment of impact.

Richard Williams, page 16

Beef ban pressure grows

Dual test for Major on Europe

Michael White Political Editor

THE Government last night faced backbench Tory pressure not to resume its "unscientific" selective cull of up to 100,000 cattle until the European Union confirms that Whitehall's climbdown will result in an easing of the worldwide ban on British beef exports.

But, as John Major braced himself for a knife-edge Commons vote on the equally controversial issue of BSE, the Agriculture Secretary, Douglas Hogg, was forced to concede that the Government was committed to implementing the selective cull, we can be certain that there will be no progress of any kind.

So far 13 people have died of the new virulent strain of CJD in Britain, which has been linked to BSE in cattle, and one million animals have been slaughtered.

Yet, as Tony Blair yesterday reminded Mr Major, hopes that the ban would be lifted by November have not materialised. "After six months, not a single piece of progress in lifting the ban has been made," he said.

Before Mr Hogg flew to Brussels last night for further talks with EU farm ministers, his retreat was reinforced by the agriculture commissioner, Franz Fischler. He told reporters that all the normal procedures - including detailed scientific analysis of the selective cull plan - would first have to be followed.

"There is a particular procedure which was agreed at the Florence summit in the summer as to what should be done," said Mr Fischler, as Mr Hogg admitted that the selective cull - suspended on scientific advice in September - would have to be assumed to fulfil the fifth Florence condition to eradicate BSE from British herds and restore consumer confidence.

Moreover, opinion within the industry has changed, with the powerful National Farmers' Union (NFU) backing the need to resume the cull, Mr Hogg told MPs.

Tory peers and MPs also challenged the move which one MP, Bill Cash, called not so much a negotiation as "a process of appeasement."

Scottish, Irish and West Country fishermen are incensed by what they see as unfair quota-hopping by EU states, notably Spain, and unfair restrictions on their own fishing rights in the name of conservation. Relations with Dublin over the so-called

"Irish box" are also tense. Ministers have promised to use international quota swaps to help the province's fishermen to compensate for past losses as a result of an EU arrangement known as the Hague Preference, the deputy Ulster Unionist leader, John Taylor MP said - 24 hours after some Unionist MPs had said they would be "mad" not to vote against the Government on fish policy as they did last December, when Mr Major lost by two votes.

Though not directly related, Mr Hogg's retreat on beef was also expected to please Unionist MPs because, if the ban is eased, Ulster's grass-fed herds will be first to benefit. Tory Euro-sceptics were also hinting they would "not rock the fishing boat" because they had bigger boats to rock.

In his statement to MPs on the Dublin summit, Mr Major steered a middle course between the warring Tory factions, both of whom took comfort from his remarks.

Stressing his doctrine of "flexibility" he told MPs he would not stand in the way of attempts by an inner core of EU countries to proceed with some elements of political union unacceptable to Britain. But such states should not use Community institutions - like the Commission and the European Court of Justice - because of the costs it would rack up for all member states.

Leader comment, page 5; Politics, page 5

Warrant out for celebrity salesman Levitt

Ian King

AN ARREST warrant was issued last night for Roger Levitt - one-time insurance salesman to the rich and famous - after he failed to answer charges before Great Marlborough Street magistrates, London, yesterday.

Mr Levitt, whose company managed investments for celebrities including film director Michael Winner and novelist Frederick Forsyth before going into administration in 1990, is accused of breaking a ban preventing him from acting as a company director.



Roger Levitt: believed to be in the United States

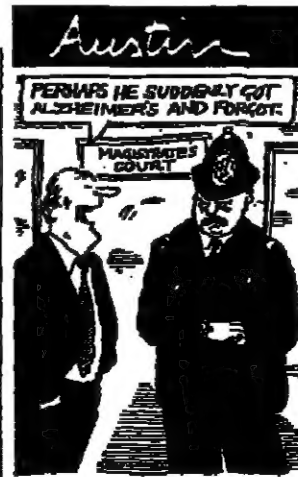
charge of fraudulent trading in 1993 and was disqualified from acting as a director or from being involved in the

management of a company for seven years.

However, according to the Department of Trade and Industry, Mr Levitt - who is believed to be in the United States - broke that order between November 26, 1993 and February 28, 1995.

When Mr Levitt failed to appear in court yesterday the DTI successfully applied for an arrest warrant.

Four other directors or officers of IBC were remanded on unconditional bail until January 27. Michael Jacobs, of West Hampstead, London, is accused of aiding and abetting Mr Levitt. Mark Segal, of Edgware, north-west London, Cecil Halpin, of Ealing, west London, and John Wilkin, of Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, are all accused of providing explanations or statements regarding Mr Levitt's involvement that they knew to be false.



Inside Story, G2 page 12

Inside

Britain The European ban on British beef will not be lifted despite a humiliating government climbdown yesterday.

World News France's National Library opens today, the largest and most expensive of the late François Mitterrand's projects in Paris.

Finance The Thorp nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield will be hit by costly delays because of plans to increase discharges from it.

Sport Blackburn Rovers finally named Scunthorpe manager Sven Goran Eriksson as their new boss, but it may be July before he arrives.

Comment and Letters 8; Obituaries 10; G2; Crossword 15; Weather 16; Radio 18; TV 18



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Sketch

Pop go the Euro-sceptics



Simon Hoggart

ALL day anxious Labour MPs have been litigating in our lifetime, which was Sir Edward Grey's prediction of the first world war. Was the flower of England's youth again to be sacrificed to the imperial ambitions of the Bundesbank?

ing out all over Europe; we shall not see them litigating in our lifetime, which was Sir Edward Grey's prediction of the first world war. Was the flower of England's youth again to be sacrificed to the imperial ambitions of the Bundesbank?

Think tank offers feelgood cheer for Tories □ Estate agents' body predicts demise of negative equity

Britain tops growth league

THE Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the West's leading economic think tank, yesterday gave a boost to the Government's re-election campaign when it said the prospects for sustained output growth and low inflation in the UK were the best in 30 years.

nations in 1997, easily outstripping Germany, France and the United States. Ministers seized on the report, with Ian Lang, the Trade Secretary, saying it was "proof positive" that the Government's economic policies were working.

ers - would be virtually eliminated from the housing market by next autumn. Although opinion polls suggest the demise of negative equity may come too late to save the Government from electoral defeat, the messages from the RICS and the OECD will keep alive Conservative hopes that economic recovery will still sway floating voters.

Government's handling of the economy, the OECD stressed that further action was needed to deliver lower borrowing and balance the budget over the medium term.

agents' body, the number of households with mortgages larger than the value of their home is set to drop from 1.7 million at the start of this year to 100,000-150,000 by next autumn.

started to ripple out from London and the South-east, with both East Anglia and the South-west showing strong demand for property.

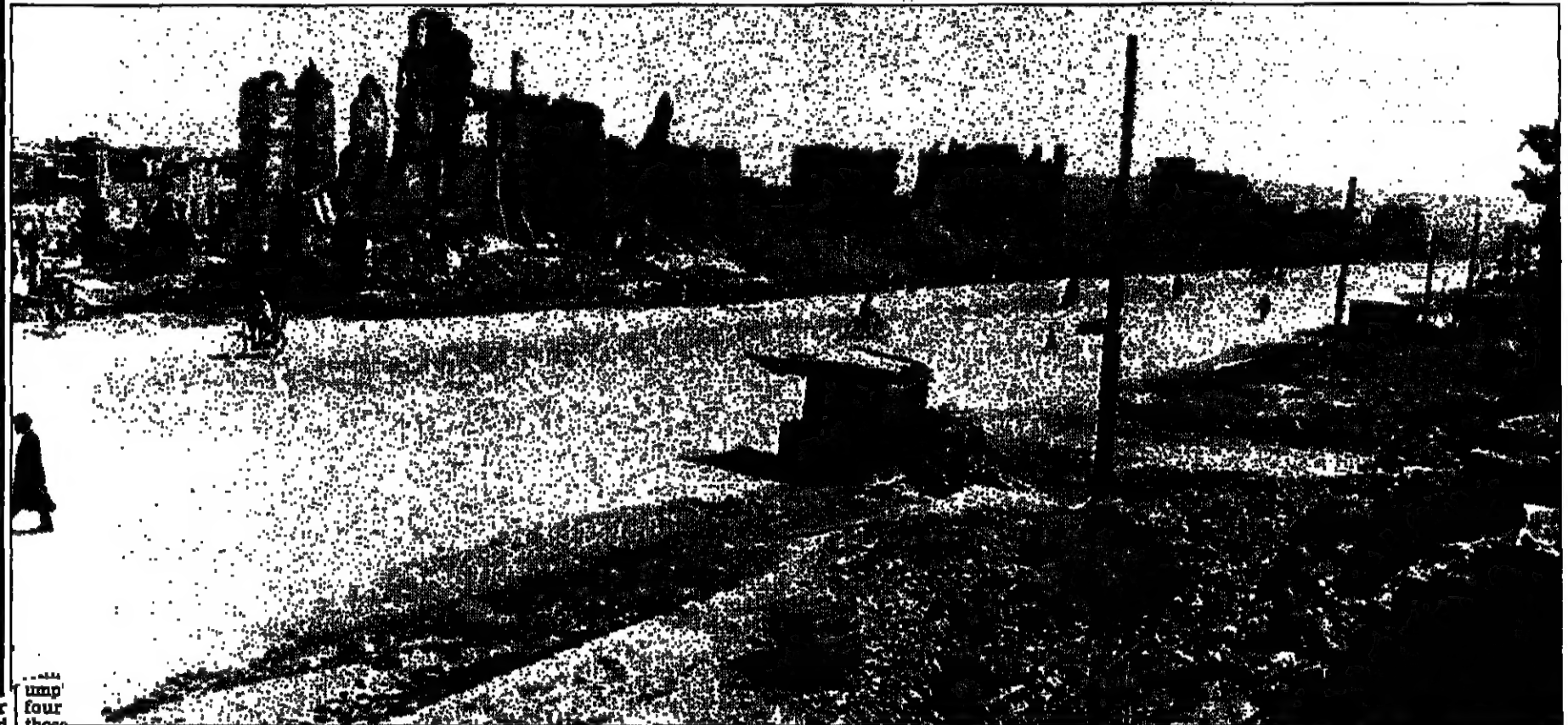
Review

Techno-buff's Arabian Nights

Alfred Hickingling

repeating. Less noted is that he is one of Britain's most dedicated theatre techno-buffs. The creation of a romantic adventure story on a stage kitted out to his own specification has been worth waiting for.

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1991: Ruined, deserted and largely ungoverned by the Taliban

Teenage 'mullahs' govern by inertia in ruined Afghan city

Suzanne Goldenberg in Kabul on Taliban's efforts to rule

TEENAGE gunmen roam free, government offices are deserted and telephone lines take an afternoon siesta. Although the Taliban militia is said to control two-thirds of Afghanistan, a regime has yet to get around to the business of governing.

ban, traffic police in the capital are one of few signs of civilian administration. They stand in pressed uniforms, waving imaginary rush-hour crowds along empty avenues.

Government officials have been replaced by youthful Taliban, turbaned fighters from the provinces whose main qualification is the claim to be mullahs (religious scholars) or mullahs, with only a fleeting education at religious colleges.

sional bureaucrats wander aimlessly, fretting at Taliban religious decrees that have compelled them to swap their suits for baggy pyjamas and caps, and to grow beards.

tion at all," he says. "We are only against corruption and immorality. As soon as we make an arrangement based on religious law and Islamic education, then schools for girls can start."

Even hospitals have not been spared. A Talib with no medical experience who speaks only halting Dari, the main language of Kabul, is in charge of Kabul's main, Jumburriyet hospital. He makes daily rounds, and doctors say he seems most concerned to ensure that the few women still on staff cover their heads and do not stray from all-female wards.

Experts at odds on TWA jet crash

Ian Katz in New York

AIR SAFETY officials were at odds and airline companies in confusion yesterday after senior investigators into the TWA 800 crash flatly contradicted their bosses' claim that a fuel system fault was the most likely cause of the accident of New York in July that killed all 230 people on board.

cause, it issued an urgent recommendation to airlines to address the flaw. The announcement left companies bracing themselves for an order to ground their 747s for potentially costly checks.

"Static is not something we are confident of." It was further evidence of rifts in the huge multi-agency team that has toiled for five months to discover what caused the TWA jet to crash.

Child cancer linked to sperm damage in smoking fathers

Whistling in the wind, page 12

charge. But the NTSB said a spark may have been produced if there was a break in the insulation. Boeing would almost certainly have to pay for any modifications to the fuel tank pipes of 747s, and could face millions of dollars in damages if held liable for the accident.

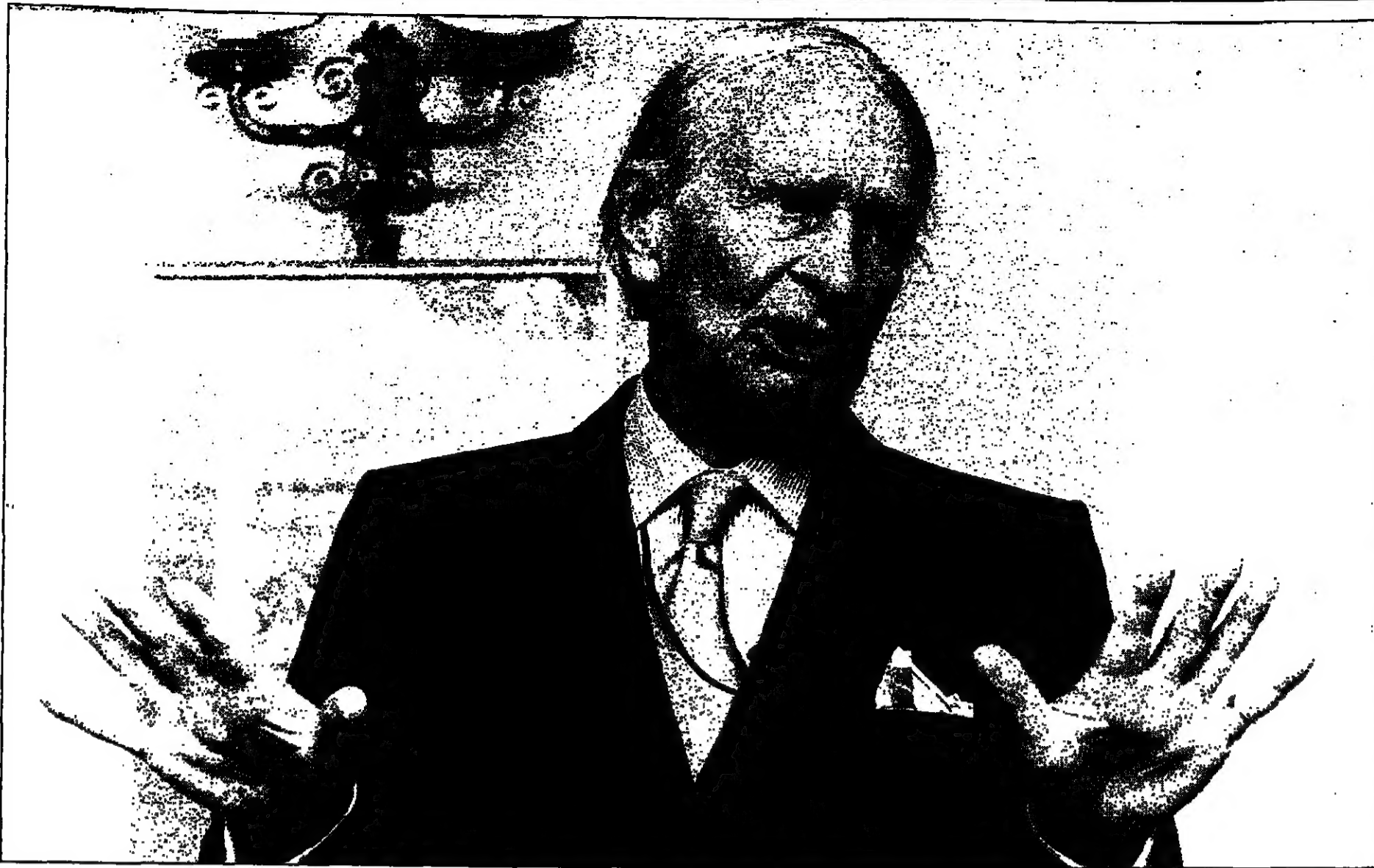
continued from page 1 ing by fathers to see if there were any new clues," said Dr Sorahan.

risk. Although this increase in risk looks alarming, the total of childhood cancers is quite small, so only a large-scale survey would have thrown up these probabilities.

Advertisement for Cava wine. Text: 'If your boss has given you Christmas day off... Pop the cork! Release the Cava! You will find Cava is just made for celebrations, and the more spontaneous the better. For one thing, you can rely on its natural sparkle and superb quality, for another, it's incredible value for money! Cava is the sparkling wine from Spain that is made by the traditional method. It comes from a land of rolling hills and valleys near Barcelona, where there's plenty of sunshine and moderate rainfall. The perfect place for vineyards. As well as being light, delicate and fragrant, Cava wines have a distinctive smoothness and crisp dryness. It takes many months of careful handling to develop these qualities. No wonder Cava's so keen to get in the glass when you open it! CASTELLBLANCH - CONDE DE CARALT - FREIXENET - SEGURA VIUDAS'

Handwritten signature or note at the bottom of the page.

Laurens van der Post dies at 90



Sir Laurens van der Post, writer of 28 books and "great source of encouragement and psychological strength, so massive in his mentality"

PHOTOGRAPH BY GARRY WEASER

Last safari for a spirit of Africa

Egomaniac or spiritual guru? John Ezard on the long life of the writer who became a major influence over the heir to the throne

SIR Laurens van der Post, witness to vanishing tribes, "dear friend" of the Prince of Wales, and the best-selling writer credited with revealing the mystical, spiritual side of Africa to a worldwide generation of white readers, has died aged 90.

The end of a life which began on a Dutch South African farm, with a bushwoman as his nurse, was announced by his daughter, the journalist Lucia Crichton-Miller.

Prince Charles was said to be "very saddened". Sir Laurens, who died in his flat in Chelsea, south-west London, on Sunday two days after his 90th birthday, was unable to attend a celebratory party which the prince had planned for him at Highgrove last Friday. A spokeswoman for the prince said Sir Laurens had been "a dear friend for a very long time".

Sir Laurens, whose first book in A Province came out 82 years ago, was by turns farmer, soldier, explorer and conservationist. The best-known among his 28 books were The Lost World Of The Kalahari (1958) and Testament To A Bushman (1984). His Japanese prison camp story The Seed And The Sower was filmed as Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence, starring David Bowie.

Sir Laurens saw in A Province as "the first book by an indigenous South African against racial prejudice". Detractors saw him as a windy, self-promoting egomaniac, with too lush a prose style, who "wouldn't know a bushman if one walked into a room".

He replied: "Egos have an honourable role in life."

Dr John Hemming, ex-director of the Royal Geographical Society, said Sir Laurens' role as an inspirer was his great achievement.

"He was not an expert in the anthropological sense or a particularly qualified explorer. But he wrote about his work beautifully and that is a greater skill. Whenever he spoke to the society, he got a vast turnout of knowledgeable people who adored him."

In old age he became godfather to Prince William. In 1987 the pair went on a four-day camp in the Kalahari, sleeping in the open. The prince was moved to tears when they saw a herd of zebra stretching along the horizon. "Africa as it was in the beginning," Sir Laurens told him.

The prince wrote that the trek was "similar to an SAS selection test but did begin to grow on you".

Greenpeace said yesterday: "His writings helped 20th century men and women retain a vision of nature."

Billy Griffiths, a prisoner-of-war with Sir Laurens for three years in Java, was at his 90th birthday party last Wednesday. "He was a wonderful man," Mr Griffiths, aged 76, said from his home in Blackpool, Lancashire.

"He was always a great source of encouragement and psychological strength, so massive in his mentality."

Sir Laurens died with his eyesight and photographic memory unimpaired; and for that, too, he thanked his enduring contact with the bushmen.

Obituary, page 10



The Prince of Wales and the "dear friend" with whom he camped in the Kalahari

Bush voices

Africa has always walked in my mind proudly upright, a giant among the other continents, making light of the bagful of blue Mediterranean slung over its back as it marches patiently through time. — Flamingo Feather, 1955

Of all man's inborn dispositions, there is nothing more heroic than the love in him. Everything else accepts defeat and dies, but love will fight no-love every inch of the way. — same

Humankind finds itself increasingly corralled on a narrow road leading it far away from what I would call a natural kind of life. We're trapped. And being trapped turns some among us to commit the most evil acts. — same

Is that any kind of life? — looking at traffic from his Chelsea flat

All they do is mock him, make snide remarks about him smelling flowers. Can they not see what this is doing to him, this constant tirade? The man they criticise so glibly is someone we're lucky to have... so full of knowledge, humility, all sorts of interests. Oh, we have had some wonderful talks. — of Prince Charles

Refugee grants to be cut by half

Alan Travis Home Affairs Editor

THE Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is to cut by half the official funding received by organisations which help with the reception and settlement of refugees.

The Home Office confirmed last night that organisations, including the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the Kent Committee for the Welfare of Migrants, the Scottish Refugee Council, the Ockendon Venture and the Refugee Arrivals Project, face cuts in their official grants.

"No final decisions have been taken," said a Home Office spokesman yesterday. "But we have never indicated to such organisations that they should rely entirely on government funding."

The expected decision to cut the £3.4 million annual grant, pencilled in from next April, by £1.5 million will have a severely damaging impact on the work of refugee groups. Most have been involved in the Government's programme to accept and help settle 1,500 Bosnian evacuees and their families.

It comes as the British Red Cross is about to begin distributing food and hygiene parcels to asylum seekers left destitute on the streets of London.

The cut was widely seen as politically vindictive last night as it follows two High Court defeats for the Government over its attempt to deny welfare benefits to those who fail to apply for asylum as soon as they arrive.

The shadow home secretary, Jack Straw, said such a decision would be outrageous, especially as the Government had just added to the

burden on refugee groups in the new asylum legislation.

Nick Hartwick, chief executive of the Refugee Council, the national refugee organisation, said a cut in their £1.1 million Home Office grant would make it very difficult for it to function. "This is absolutely outrageous. Having cut the entitlement of asylum seekers to benefits, we have struggled to provide people with a roof over their heads and something to eat. The consequences would be devastating. We hope even at this late stage they will pull back."

Hildegard Dumper of Refugee Action, which helps those already given official refugee status, said most of their £950,000 a year budget depended on the Home Office grant. "We would be completely hit. Our emphasis has always been on working with refugees and their communities so that they can be independent and make a positive contribution to mainstream British society. Our work would be totally dismantled."

The United Nations General Assembly was last night set to approve a British-sponsored declaration that ensures the UN convention on refugees does not apply to anyone involved in terrorism, writes Ian Black.

The 1951 convention will now spell out that "financing, planning and inciting terrorist acts" is "contrary to the principles of the United Nations."

Human rights groups say the change raises the possibility that someone arriving in Britain could be denied entry — and thus the chance of even seeking asylum — simply because his own government calls him a terrorist.

Isabel Hilton, page 9; 62 cover story

Cash crisis hits soccer grounds

Nick Varley Sports Correspondent

THE modernisation of football grounds in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster is to be put on hold because of a cash crisis caused by the impact of the National Lottery.

The Football Trust, the body which gives grants for ground improvements, will make no new awards after its income — based on pools and spot-the-ball competition takings — fell from £37 million to about £10 million this financial year.

It means at least 12 lower division clubs may not be able to move to new grounds as planned.

The two Premier League clubs seeking new grounds — Southampton and Wimbledon — may also be ineligible for money because it is felt limited funds should not be directed to the wealthier clubs.

A total of £2.5 million already allocated to national stadium improvements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland may be recalled.

Smaller scale grants, covering three-quarters of more minor ground improvements periodically demanded by local safety officials, will be abolished.

Richard Faulkner, deputy chairman of the trust, said the funding impasse could

mean the Taylor report into Hillsborough would only be implemented in the most minimal way in lower divisions.

"The work on the Premiership is virtually complete and the majority of the work has been done in the First Division, but in Divisions Two and Three we have barely scratched the surface."

The cash problems stem from the introduction of the National Lottery and its impact on the trust's funding sources, the pools and spot-the-ball competitions.

Three years ago the trust, which was set up after the Ibrox disaster of 1971 and is independent of government, enjoyed an annual income of £14 million from spot-the-ball and £23.5 million from a 3 per cent rebate on betting duty.

The funds went towards the £138 million the trust contributed to the £437 million bill to replace crumbling terraces with new all-seater stands.

But the impact of the lottery has meant the voluntary contribution from spot-the-ball has ended and pools income has slumped by more than half.

The introduction of a weekly lottery draw in the New Year means the trust is preparing for its income to dip under £10 million, while calculating that up to £40 million still needs to be spent to meet the Taylor report before its 1999 deadline.



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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

Stuart Millar on teaching machines to think

Scientists offer computer with mind of its own

IT IS a debate which has troubled philosophers and scientists since the dawn of the computer age. But the prospect of humans becoming obsolete might have moved a step nearer with the appearance of two pieces of powerful computer technology which the developers claim demonstrate human traits.

Scientists will unveil Magnus, which they insist has a mind of its own, at the Science Museum in London today.

On the outside it is nothing more than a laptop computer, but the development team at Imperial College, London, says the technology inside allows it to demonstrate many of the elements of consciousness. They claim it is conscious of its surroundings and its existence, and shows signs of being able to exercise free will.

Another scientist has meanwhile claimed that semi-intelligent computer programs roaming the Internet in the near future could band together in artificial societies. Programs known as agents already exist and are becoming increasingly complex. Users programme them to search the Internet for information.

But Jim Doran, of Essex University, takes this a step further. He believes intelligent programs could exist independently on the Internet. Like Magnus, they would act autonomously using their ac-

Byte ideas

□ When let loose in simulated "worlds" on the computer, Magnus links objects to their names, learning the meaning of words.

□ Magnus shows signs of understanding the results of its actions after exploring these worlds and learning about the effect it can have on them. This suggests awareness of its own existence, say its creators.

□ Magnus has been given a sense of hunger, and selects a piece of fruit when it feels hungry, thus deducting for itself the best course.

□ In a given situation, Magnus is aware of the many possible actions it can take, and is capable of choosing the best one for a specific purpose—suggests ability to exercise free will.

neural networks, which makes computers behave as if made up of a collection of crude brain cells—neurons—connected to one another.

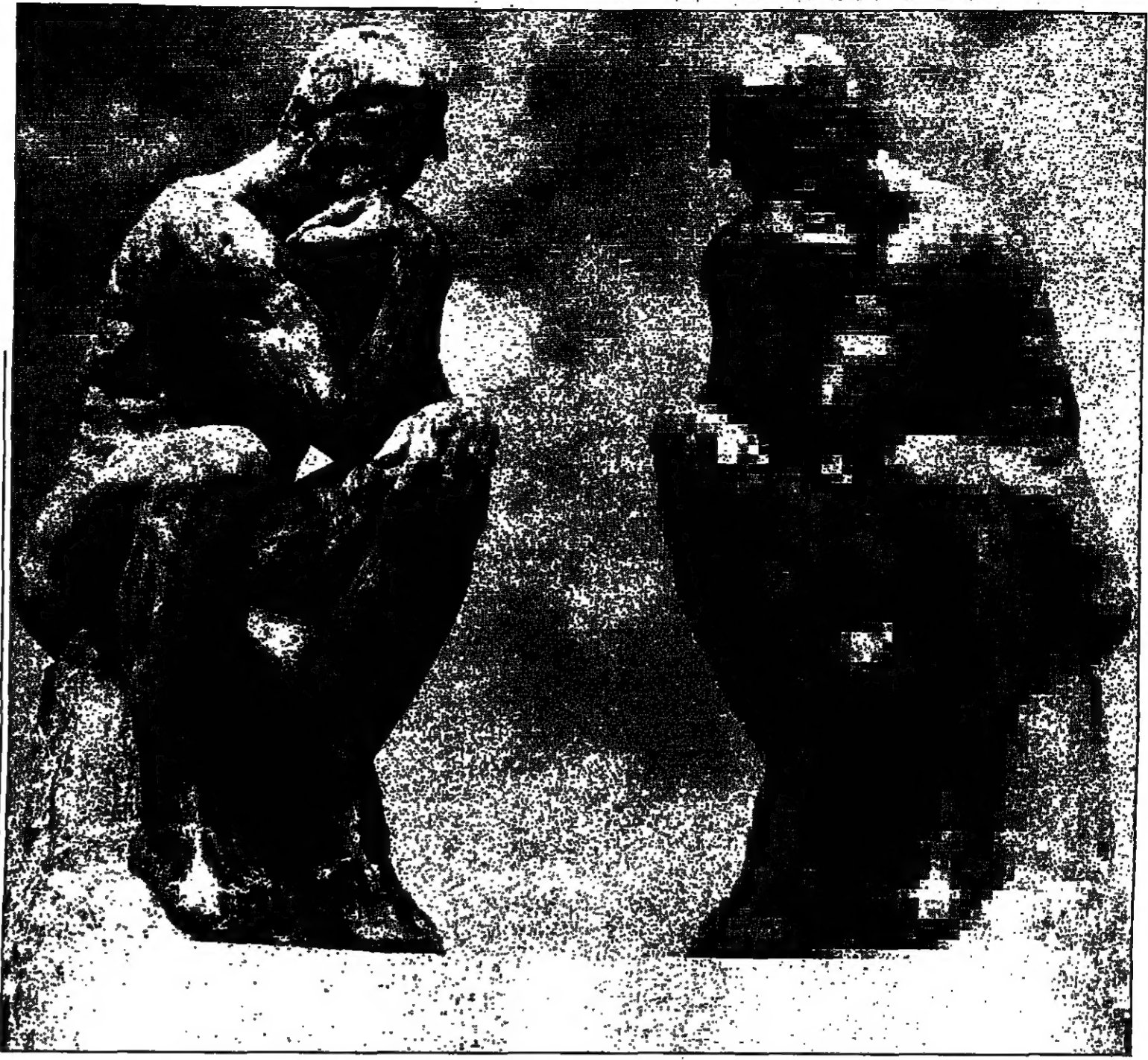
Unlike ordinary computers the networks are not programmed but trained by example. This allows them to acquire core expertise, rather than simple pre-programmed knowledge, which gives them the power to tackle problems not previously encountered.

Igor Aleksander, who led the research team, said: "We wanted to investigate consciousness by building a machine based on guesses about how real brains might produce it. But real brains are too complicated to use and you can't easily see what is going on inside them. With a machine you can."

Professor Aleksander said the project, which has cost £200,000 so far, will lead to the development of computers far easier for humans to work with.

But a leading neuroscientist cast doubt on Magnus's ability. Steven Rose, of the Open University, said: "I don't think anyone would realistically think that what Professor Aleksander has created is anything like consciousness. It is good fun, but it is more hype than anything."

"Definitions of consciousness without the experience, history and social relations which shape human consciousness would seem to be very lacking indeed."



Deep thinkers... Some experts have called for limits on the extent to which computers can replicate human mental processes. PHOTOGRAPH BY NICKER TOOTH

Mother challenges forced caesarean operation

Clare Dyer on woman's legal fight against hospital's action under mental health act

A 29-year-old woman with no history of mental health problems who was "sectioned" under the Mental Health Act and forced to have a caesarean operation is to

challenge judges' power to order such operations. The south London woman who works in the health care field is one of two women forced to undergo caesarean operations by court order

who have been granted legal aid to challenge the legality of their treatment. Eight months into her pregnancy she was showing signs of pre-eclampsia, a condition involving high blood pressure and swollen ankles which can be life-threatening if severe. Convinced through her own medical knowledge that her condition was not that seri-

ous, she refused the advice of the GP whose list she had just joined to go into hospital immediately to have the baby. The GP called a social worker approved under the Mental Health Act and a duty psychiatrist and within hours she was in hospital under a section of the act allowing patients with a mental disorder to be treated against their will.

She said: "I would like to think I can contribute to avoiding somebody else having to go through this experience. Nothing is more private or personal than having a baby. If you can't make your own decision about that, however odd, it's frightening."

A single woman who was expecting her first baby, she planned to have the baby at home. "I would never consent to a general anaesthetic. I'm non-interventionist."

In the case of Fahima Chowdhury from Rochdale, Lancashire, one of the women granted legal aid, lawyers told the judge, Mr Justice Johnson, in a two-minute hearing that she and her baby would be dead within the hour unless the operation was carried out. Mrs Chowdhury had had a previous baby by caesarean

and insisted she would rather die than have another, but consented after the court order was made. In two cases, including that of the south London woman, who does not want to be named, caesarean operations have been carried out under the Mental Health Act, even though the act only authorises forcible "treatment for a mental disorder".

Three family judges welcomed the court challenges, which they hope will provide guidance for judges facing life or death decisions.

Judges are concerned because the rulings seem to call into question the legal principle that a mentally competent adult is entitled to refuse any treatment, even if the result is certain death. The Appeal Court has also held that the

unborn child is not a person with rights capable of protection by the court. To sanction an operation against a woman's will, the judge has to find, in effect, that she is not mentally capable of taking decisions. In Mrs Chowdhury's case, heard last June, Mr Justice Johnson ruled that the effects of a prolonged labour and drugs rendered her mentally incapable of giving a valid refusal.

The south London woman initially spent six hours in a psychiatric hospital before she was taken to St George's hospital in Tooting.

By noon the next day she had secured a solicitor and she spelled out her written refusal to consent to an operation. But around 3pm she was told St George's Healthcare NHS Trust had obtained a

court declaration authorising any necessary treatment. She "had no knowledge they were seeking to go to court" and saw the court order around 4.30pm. She asked for it to be faxed to her solicitor, but by 5pm she was being sedated for the operation.

"I found it particularly frightening they didn't say they were going to court. I was perfectly capable of appearing in court."

Her baby daughter, now eight months old, is "a wonderful baby and I wouldn't be without her." She still believes in letting nature take its course.

A few days after the birth she saw another psychiatrist who lifted the section. "The consultant psychiatrist said in my notes I bordered on the eccentric but nothing more."

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Remains of 27 British first world war soldiers to be reburied

Alex Bellis

THE remains of 27 British first world war soldiers discovered by French bulldozers in a military cemetery in the Royal British Legion said last night.

Workers stumbled across the bodies on Friday in a shallow mass grave near the vil-

lage of Monchy-le-Preux in northern France, one of the war's great battlefields. The site of the grave, believed to have been a frontline field hospital, is under guard and scientific examination to identify the men has begun.

Tunic buttons and shoulder flashes indicate that most were with the 13th Battalion Royal Fusiliers. Some identi-

fication tags have also been found. The grave had been hit by German shells during the Battle of Arras, disturbing six of the bodies and causing confusion over the number of soldiers buried.

Monchy saw some of the bloodiest action of the allied spring offensive in 1917, and the 13th Battalion Royal Fusiliers suffered heavy losses from German machine guns.

A spokesman for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission said: "Whether we are successful or not in identifying them, the men will be reburied in a war cemetery in France."

"The nearest would be at Arras but we want to keep the men together and the problem would be whether there are 27 plots there."

Bishop boycotts cathedral during goodwill season

Martin Wainwright

A CORROSIVE row at Lincoln cathedral has claimed a new victim—the Christmas celebrations.

The city's bishop, the Rt Rev Robert Harty, is to boycott official festivities in protest at the refusal of its divided governing chapter to end a bitter eight year quarrel. The bishop declined to attend Lincoln's carol service at the weekend and is not expected to officiate over Christmas.

A spokesman said that it would be inappropriate after the bishop's repeated appeals for an end to the rancorous dispute between Lincoln's dean, the Rev Brandon Jackson, and the sub-dean, the Rev Rex Davies.

The personal dispute dates back to a disastrous fund-raising tour of Australia by Lincoln's copy of Mr Davies. Mr Jackson was appointed shortly afterwards with the approval of the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, a native of Lincolnshire.

A woman verger's allegations of sexual misconduct against the dean failed last year.

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Cull retreat fails to ease beef ban

Even MacAskill and Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE European ban on British beef will not be lifted in spite of a humiliating government climbdown yesterday in agreeing to an additional cull of 100,000 cattle.

The Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, told the Commons yesterday that even with the concession, there was no prospect of the ban on exports of British beef to Europe being relaxed for months. But European Commission sources hinted yesterday that even a few months was optimistic.

The manoeuvring came as Victoria Lowther, aged 19, of Carlisle, Cumbria, became the 13th person to die from a new strain of CJD, the human form of BSE or mad cow disease.

The selective cull will cost £150 million and comes on top of the slaughter of one million cattle. The Government's estimate of the total cost for the handling of the BSE crisis — from March this year up until 1998 — is £3.2 billion.

Labour's shadow agricultural minister, Gavin Strang, accused Mr Hogg of having totally mismanaged the crisis. Tory Euro-sceptics were even more scathing.

There were repeated calls for Mr Hogg to announce a timetable for the lifting of the ban, but he told the Commons he was not in a position to do so. He said: "The House

should not be under any illusion as to how quickly a selective cull will lead to a resumption of exports."

Since March this year, the Government has made several embarrassing policy shifts, especially its month-long non-cooperation policy with Europe. After agreeing to a selective cull at the Florence European Union summit in June, the Government reneged on this in September, suspending the cull on the basis of what it claimed was new scientific advice.

Mr Hogg was forced to admit yesterday that this "scientific advice" could no longer delay the cull agreed at Florence. In a series of exchanges, he admitted that the reason for the cull was political, to try to re-establish confidence in British beef abroad.

He said: "We have concluded that the scientific evidence is unlikely to change decisively the basis of the selective cull as agreed in the Florence agreement."

There is still considerable suspicion in the European Commission. Franz Fischler, the Agriculture Commissioner, insisted Britain must adhere to the conditions agreed in Florence, showing signs of irritation as he announced plans to set up an independent Europe-wide food safety monitoring unit.

Britain's next step will have to be a document setting out its proposals to tackle BSE, to be considered by the commission.



Fishermen Paul Hurst with his boat at North Shields... 'the quota system is a disgrace'

Cut-throat battle for British stocks as some fishermen sell out to foreign fleets

Peter Hetherington

TRAWLERMAN Paul Hurst yesterday chucked at the irony of John Major's predicament over last night's close Commons vote on EU fisheries policy.

With Tory Euro-sceptics angry over Spanish and Dutch vessels quota-hopping under a convenient Union flag, British fisher-

men know that some in their midst are to blame for selling out.

While hauling a few boxes of codling, haddock, hake and prawns from his vessel *Becky* on the North Shields quayside, Mr Hurst wondered how much longer he could keep going in the cut-throat North Sea.

Some of his friends had already taken government inducements to scrap their

vessels in a £53 million decommissioning scheme which will see the UK fleet cut by up to 8 per cent. Six hundred vessels will go to breakers' yards by the end of next year.

But others see richer pickings in selling their licences to the Spanish in complex deals often engineered by middlemen in Britain.

Three or four have gone that way from up here", Mr Hurst said. "The system is a disgrace. I know, but once the licence has been sold you can sell your boat on to someone else, maybe as a pleasure craft."

Some do not take kindly

to the sight of British fishermen oiling the wheels of a practice that can prove more lucrative than decommissioning. "You might get from £30,000 to £50,000 for scrapping a boat but by selling a licence you can sometimes make more," said another North Shields fisherman. "The system is a fiddle, and too many turn a blind eye to it."

The Ministry of Agriculture estimates that 100 Spanish boats and 40 Dutch vessels, all with British licences, are taking well over 40 per cent of the British quotas of hake and plaice respectively, along with al-

most 80 percent of the UK monkfish allocation.

"You don't have to be a xenophobe to realise there's something seriously wrong", said Barry Jones, chief executive of the National Federation of Fishermen's organisations, which represents 2000 vessel owners.

After introducing a new Merchant Shipping Act in 1995 to outlaw the quota-hopping practice, only to find it declared illegal in the European court two years later, Britain now wants to renegotiate the Treaty of Rome to outlaw many flags of convenience.

Net amounts

- Between 1981 and 1995, annual white fish landings in UK fell by almost 70 per cent to 284,000 tonnes
- Values of fish landed this year likely to be 6 per cent up on 1995 at approaching £400 million — more a result of higher prices than rising stocks
- Illegally caught "black fish" could mean UK is exceeding EU quota by up to a third — 100,000 tonnes annually
- Up to 8 per cent of UK fleet, 600 vessels, being scrapped in £53 million write-off scheme. But catches not falling correspondingly

Major challenged over Dublin hint

Michael White Political Editor

LABOUR last night challenged John Major to repudiate Tory Euro-sceptic claims that his Commons statement on the EU's Dublin summit contained a significant hint that he may put outright British withdrawal on the political agenda.

Mr Major was asked by Robin Cook, the shadow foreign secretary, to explain the final paragraph of his statement.

It quoted EU Commission president Jacques Santer, saying last week that "the moment of truth lies ahead." Mr Major added: "There is one sense at least in which he is right. The choices made will determine not only the success and stability of Europe as a whole, but Britain's relationship with it."

With Tory Euro-sceptics like Sir Teddy Taylor welcoming the remark, Mr Cook demanded repudiation of anyone spreading such a "damaging" interpretation. Pro-EU MPs insisted Mr Major had effectively

ruled out such an option during other exchanges.

Mr Major told MPs he had held the line on key British demands on the final terms of the current inter-governmental conference (IGC), the Maastricht review package which must be decided at the Amsterdam summit in June.

He also defended as a "right balance" the compromise terms on the stability pact for running a single European currency, while repeatedly stressing his doubts about whether enough countries will be ready to make it viable in 1999. As for the euro-bank note design, "everyone will have their own views on these," he added coolly.

At the heart of the statement was his insistence on the flexible development of Europe, "in which those who want to integrate further in particular areas should not be frustrated unreasonably, although, if they wish to use EU institutions, they can proceed only through unanimity." In practice that means he would use the UK veto to stop use of EU budgets, the Commission and EU court.

Labour bides its time on tabling confidence vote

Michael White explains the arithmetic behind delay in bringing Government down

IF THE Government manages to stave off a direct vote of no confidence before John Major calls his unavoidable general election next spring it may be thanks to Barry Porter, a genial rightwing Tory MP who died last month.

Under guidance from the discreetly influential Commons clerks the House has voted to accept that a seat which elected a Tory (or Labour) remains so until the voters deliver it to another party at a by-election.

The ruling protected the Tory majority when the "whipless nine" were ineffectually disciplined last year. It also protects it today. Apart from the Speaker and three deputies, there are now 329 Tory MPs and 323 Opposition

MPs, plus Mr Porter's Tory vacancy in Wirral South.

That fine balance may matter on January 15 when the Commons committee of selection decides whether or not the Government is entitled to an 18-17 majority on the standing committee which examines the Budget details in the Finance Bill.

If that committee so decides, the Commons itself could override it and impose a 18-16 committee. In that case the chairman would break ties by voting for the status quo. Fine, if that means voting down Opposition amendments, less so if ministers cannot carry their own amendments.

At that point Tony Blair might think the Government was unable to drive the central engine of government —

finance. If David Trimble's Unionist troops agree, quite possibly for Ulsterish reasons of their own, there could be a hurried election in late February or March.

But when is a Commons defeat a matter of such importance that it triggers an immediate vote of no confidence, tabled by the Opposition? The pragmatic answer is, whenever an Opposition

leader senses that this is the moment to bring the Government down, as Margaret Thatcher finally did when referendum in Scotland and Wales failed convincingly to support Labour's devolution legislation on March 28 1979.

For the first time since 1941 a British government fell directly on a Commons no confidence vote, 311 to 310. The consensus was that last

night's annual debates on the Government's EU-driven fisheries policy was not such an issue. "After all," said more than one MP, "they lost this vote last December and just carried on."

Early in Mrs Thatcher's Tory leadership, in March 1976, she lost a premature no confidence vote badly, by 297-290. It made her cautious, so that the motion that ousted

Jin Callaghan was actually tabled by the Scottish Nationalists, supported by the Tories. Mr Blair and his chief whip, Donald Dewar, are showing similar caution.

They do not want a December election or even one in January. It would be unpopular, turnout might be low, and they might get the blame. Better to wait and pounce on the small print of the Finance Bill.

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Peer threatens rearguard fight against Dunblane bill

THE Government was last night warned of fierce resistance by pro-shooting supporters as the Lords opened debate on the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, introduced after the Dunblane massacre.

Crossbencher the Earl of Stratford protested that the banning of private ownership of pistols of more than .22 calibre "runs counter to natural justice and does not represent a considered response to the Dunblane tragedy".

He said the fact that there were 36 backbench peers down to speak in the second reading debate was evidence of the extent to which his criticisms were shared. However, he said he would not press an amendment opposing second reading, saying he tabled it "to get a reaction".

The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, originally told the Commons he hoped the bill would be on the statute book by Christmas. It now has no hope of becoming law before February.

The measure's opponents in the Lords will have large scope to press their criticisms and table amendments during the line-by-line committee stage expected on January 16 and 21.

Opening the debate earlier, the Home Office minister, Baroness Blatch said: "Much as I deeply regret the difficulties which gun clubs and firearms dealers are facing, the Government doesn't believe that their losses can be or should be underwritten by the taxpayer."

She told Lord Stratford: "The convention of this House is that bills sent from the Commons are given a second reading and, usually, in this House, without a vote."

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US anti-Castro penalties challenged at summit

EU leaders press Clinton on Cuba

Richard Thomas in Washington

BILL CLINTON claimed to have "cleared the air" with Europe in the row over United States trade sanctions against Cuba and to have taken another step towards global free trade in talks yesterday with the European Commission president, Jacques Santer, and John Bruton, Ireland's prime minister and the current EU president.

After his first major summit since re-election, Mr Clinton said the US and Europe shared the same aim — promoting democracy in Cuba — but their methods differed.

But Mr Santer said that the European legal challenge to the Helms-Burton Act, which seeks to punish non-US firms which do business with Cuba, would proceed.

Mr Bruton added: "We see this as an attempt to impose US law outside US territory."

Mr Clinton refused to say whether he would further delay implementation of the act.

Both sides welcomed the progress that has been made to reduce trade barriers, including a deal on telecommunications and medical equipment and agreement on action against organised crime.

Cuba is now the EU's only serious bone of contention with the US. Hope of a compromise Helms-Burton — possibly President Clinton agreeing to another six-month waiver of the act — has risen in recent weeks, in part because of the tougher line taken against Cuba by previously sympathetic European states.

Spain, which was an informal ally of Fidel Castro's regime, has blocked \$22 million of short-term loans to Cuba and frozen £1.9 million of aid money. Spain's conservative prime minister, José María Aznar, has told Havana to speed up progress towards greater democracy.

Yesterday's summit also discussed moves towards freer global trade, after a long-awaited deal at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to cut tariffs on information technology and the US compromise with Japan on cross-border insurance sales.

After the Dublin agreement on the economic conditions required for country's wishing to adopt the single currency in 1999, closer links between the EU and Nafta (North American Free Trade Agreement) blocs were also on the agenda.

Mr Clinton told his guests that the American economy was continuing to grow strongly, on the day that indicators showed a sharp

increase in US growth in November while other countries gradually edged out of recession.

He also attempted to push ahead with the "war against international terrorism" which he announced at the spring meeting of the Group of Seven industrialised nations. The initiative was prompted by fear that criminal syndicates are turning free trade to their own advantage in drug-smuggling and money laundering.

The three leaders were also said to be discussing China's application to join the WTO. Although US businesses are keen to improve their access to 1 billion Chinese consumers, concerns about the country's human-rights record and Hong Kong's future have slowed down negotiations.

China's attempt to gain entry as a developing, rather than developed country — a status which increases protection for state-run industries — is strongly opposed by European WTO members.

But Mr Clinton is anxious to see progress as America's trade deficit with China increases, and Mr Clinton was expected to put pressure on Mr Bruton and Mr Santer.

One US official told the Wall Street Journal: "This is a chance to lower trade barriers in the fastest-growing market in the world."



Soldiers march in New Delhi yesterday to mark the 25th anniversary of India's victory against Pakistan which led to independence for Bangladesh. After nine months of fighting, on December 16 1971, more than 90,000 Pakistani troops surrendered in Dhaka. The show, watched by the prime minister, H. D. Deve Gowda, was staged against the wishes of the foreign ministry, which feared it might harm relations with Pakistan

Canadian group's boycott of Florida gathers pace

Howard Schneider in Toronto

CANADIAN student and religious groups are refusing to take holidays in Florida in protest at United States restrictions on trade with Cuba.

Backed by the Canadian Federation of Students, religious denominations and an array of other organisations, the boycott has the long-term aim of forcing the US to waive enforcement of the Helms-Burton Act.

"I don't think most Canadians want to make enemies with Florida — I don't think anybody wants to do this," said Deborah Chapman, co-ordinator of the Boycott Florida Campaign.

Last year, more Canadians than any other nationality — 1.7 million — visited Florida and spent about \$1.3 billion (\$230 million); money the campaign hopes to divert from wet T-shirt contests and Disney World.

"We know we have competition against Mickey Mouse's 50th birthday, and this is going to be an uphill battle," Ms Chapman said.

"But what we are trying to do is present options for Canadians. By January it is going to be full out."

That is, unless President Bill Clinton agrees to the boycotters and other critics of US policy by suspending

enforcement of what many regard as an odious, imperialistic, arrogant law.

The act was approved after Cuba shot down two small civilian planes heading for the island earlier this year. It penalises companies and people who invest in Cuba and thereby "traffics" in property expropriated by President Fidel Castro's government.

The intention of its authors, Jesse Helms and Dan Burton, is to strengthen the longstanding US boycott of Cuba, thus encouraging the replacement of the communist government with democratic rule.

Regardless of where the alleged violators are based, the law allows claims to be brought against them in US courts, and they can be forbidden entry to the US, Canada, Mexico, the European Union and others have declared the measures meaningless.

Canada argues that its open-trade policy is more effective in promoting de-

mocracy than the US trade embargo, and Washington has no right to police Canadian companies.

President Clinton has used a provision in the law to delay enforcement of its most invasive aspects until January, and the boycotters are urging him to extend the delay.

The group has gained the support of trade union, religious and solidarity groups. The Anglican Council of General Synod extended the scope, urging its members to "consider vacation destinations in Cuba, the Caribbean or Canada in preference to American destinations".

Church officials said the synod opposed US policy because of the harm it did to ordinary Cubans, and because it interfered with the Church's work.

The Canadian Federation of Students is working through its network of travel agents to promote resorts elsewhere, exploring the possibility of discounted airfares to other places, such as Cuba itself.

The campaign is distributing 20,000 "Cuba St. Florida No!" postcards for its members to send to Florida's Chamber of Commerce.

Fran Conaway, a chamber spokeswoman, said it would miss its Canadian visitors, but added: "The tourism industry does not have any control over national law." — Washington Post.

UN to rule on Kuwaiti claim for Gulf war fires

Owen Bennett Jones in Geneva

THE United Nations Compensation Commission is expected to rule today that Iraq must pay the Kuwaiti Oil Company at least \$510 million (\$260 million) to meet the costs of extinguishing the oil-well fires started by retreating Iraqi troops in 1991.

The company originally asked for \$600 million compensation for putting out fires at more than 700 wells after the Gulf war. A panel of three judges, from Denmark, Lebanon and Nigeria, decided that the bulk of the claim was valid but that around one-third of it should be re-submitted to the UNCC.

A formal decision by the UNCC's governing council to approve the recommendation is expected to go through yesterday.

But questions from Egypt, France, Indonesia, China and Russia resulted in the governing council meeting being extended today.

The Americans and the

British, anxious not to send the wrong signals to Baghdad, want the compensation approved without delay.

"When you deal with figures like this there is bound to be some hesitation, but I think the payment will be approved at this governing council meeting," one Western diplomat said.

Kuwaiti officials have urged the commission to approve the claim.

Sabika Al Abdul Razzaq, who is responsible for co-ordinating Kuwait's compensation claims, said: "This is something of great political and psychological importance for us. Don't forget that Kuwait's oil sector is the main source of the country's revenues and the Iraqis tried to blow it up."

Under UN Security Council resolution 688, the UNCC will receive 30 per cent of Iraq's oil revenues to fund compensation payments.

The recently agreed oil-for-food deal means that Iraqi oil exports have now resumed and the UNCC will soon be able to make some payments.

The UNCC's adjudicating

panel rejected Iraqi claims that the fires had been caused by allied bombing. "The bulk of the oil-well fires were directly caused by explosives placed on the well heads and detonated by Iraqi armed forces," the panel concluded.

The only part of the claim to be disallowed was \$3 million for the cost of maintaining Kuwait's oilfield fire service. The panel ruled that the Kuwaitis would have had to pay for a fire service even if the Iraqis had not set the wells alight.

Even if the payment is approved today, it will be some time before Kuwait sees any of the money. The UNCC is committed to making payments to a number of different categories of claimants before it gets on to recompensing corporate losses.

Individuals who suffered bereavement or personal financial loss are the first in the queue and it will be months, or even years, before the UNCC has enough money to pay off the backlog of nearly \$4 billion worth of claims which it has already approved.

News in brief

Somali fighting fuels war fears

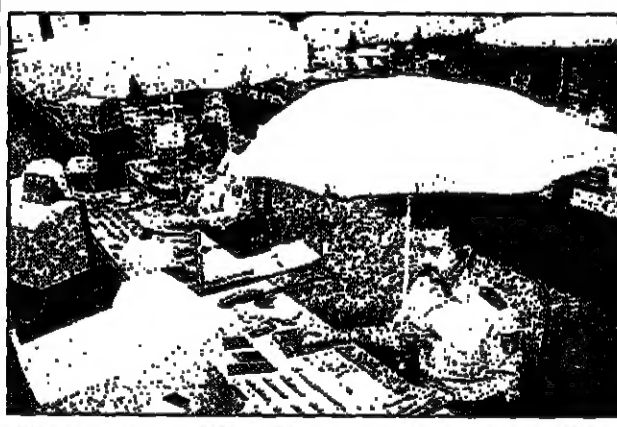
THE DEATH toll stood at more than 100 yesterday as rival factions battled for a third straight day in Somalia's capital. Security sources said at least nine militiamen were killed and 22 wounded in heavy clashes between the forces of Hussein Aidede and Osman Hassan Ali Atto at Mogadishu's airport.

More than 80 people died and at least 175 were wounded at the weekend, including 50 civilians, in fighting between Mr Aidede's forces and those of three allied factions, raising fears of a final all-out war for the capital. — *Reuters, Mogadishu.*

Former PM may verify poll

THE FORMER Spanish prime minister, Felipe Gonzalez, has been asked to lead a European observer force to investigate disputed local elections in former Yugoslavia, a government spokesman said yesterday. Mr Gonzalez, now leader of the Socialist Party opposition, had not yet agreed to lead the mission, an official said.

The Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, under pressure from mass daily street protests at alleged fraud in the municipal elections, offered on Friday to allow the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to send a delegation to investigate the poll. — *Reuters, Madrid.*



Sitting pretty... Police officers in their new £17.5 million headquarters in Hamburg enjoy the benefit of parasols, which have been installed to protect staff from the cold draughts caused by the air-conditioning system

Zaire boycotts summit

THERE was little hope of progress on the problems of Central Africa at a summit of eight leaders in Nairobi yesterday after Zaire stayed away and Nelson Mandela put in only a brief appearance. Zaire, at the heart of the conflict, accuses Rwanda and Uganda of supporting a major rebellion there, displacing tens of thousands of refugees.

Mr Mandela stayed only two hours, explaining that South Africa's constitution barred both him and the vice-president being absent simultaneously. — *Reuters, Nairobi.*

No Swiss visa for Uday

SWITZERLAND'S foreign ministry said yesterday it had received no visa request for the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's son, Uday, who an Arabic newspaper said would be flown to Switzerland for medical treatment after being shot last week.

Al-Hayat said in London yesterday that Iraqi authorities had ordered a plane to take Uday to Switzerland after he was shot and wounded in a Baghdad street on Thursday night. Uday, 33, is in Ibn Sina hospital in Baghdad. — *Reuters, Bern.*

Death sentence lifted

A SOUTH Korean appeal court yesterday commuted the death sentence on the former president, Chun Doo-hwan, mastermind of the Kwangju massacre, to life imprisonment.

The Seoul High Court also cut the jail term of Chun's successor, Roh Tae-woo, from 22½ to 17 years, reduced sentences on generals tied to the events and let five tycoons, including the head of Daewoo, walk free from bribery charges. — *Reuters, Seoul.*

Judge asks Alaska if son can keep mother on ice

Sharon Bhatta in Jerusalem

A TEL AVIV judge is considering a bizarre request from a grieving son to bury his mother in ice in Alaska.

The idea is a compromise between Moshe Beerl's wish to keep his mother near him in a deep freeze and the health and religious authorities' insistence on Miriam Astrovit's body being buried as quickly as possible.

"I love my mother and find it difficult to part from her," Mr Beerl, aged 40, explained after a court hearing on Sunday at which the judge deferred a ruling. "I had a special relationship with her and this is the only way to bring her back to life."

Astrovit died of cancer two weeks ago, aged 75, and ever since then her son has been fighting Wolfson Hospital in Tel Aviv to let him freeze her body until medical science is sufficiently advanced to revive it.

The hospital doctors eventually called the police when the distraught son told them that he had the legal right to take his mother's body and place it in the deep freeze, which had been specially bought for her only a few days earlier.

The freezing will preserve her memory and her body," Mr Beerl told Judge Amram Binyamin. "My relationship with my mother was very strong and it was very painful for me when she died. Mother wanted this and I had great difficulty in parting from her."

The authorities in Tel Aviv are less than sympathetic. Under Jewish law, which forbids cremation, bodies must be buried within 48 hours. "We come



Moshe Beerl leaves court after asking permission to bury his mother in Alaskan ice

has been in the morgue for more than 12 days and it will just rot if we wait any longer," she said.

The final word rests with Judge Binyamin, who says he is waiting to hear from the government of Alaska. If Alaska bans the entry of Astrovit's body, then Mr Beerl and his sister, Rachel, say they will ask the judge to let them bury their mother in the usual way — but only after she has been preserved in formaldehyde with a permanent cover of ice.

Rifkind urges Cypriots to end island arms race

Chris Drake in Nicosia and Ian Black in London

MALCOLM RIFKIND, the Foreign Secretary, told Greek and Turkish Cypriots yesterday that it was their responsibility to find a solution to the problems of the divided island, and warned that greater militarisation could defeat efforts to start peace talks.

Speaking at the end of a brief visit to Nicosia, he said the number of troops and weapons on the island was "dangerously high" and out of all proportion to either side's defence requirements.

Mr Rifkind, the first British foreign secretary to visit Cyprus since independence from Britain in 1960, brought no new initiatives for reunifying the island, divided since Turkey invaded in 1974, but he offered a 10-point plan for building confidence.

"I sense there is a view in both communities that 1997 is a crucial year which could mark radical progress or be a massive lost opportunity," he told reporters after meeting the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş.

Outlining his 10 points, Mr Rifkind said the boundaries of a future Cypriot federation should not follow the present ceasefire line, and called on the two sides to take steps to encourage mutual confidence.

"One cannot reverse 30 years of disappointments in an event of a week, or several months," he said.

Mr Rifkind will be pleased by the reception he was given: despite the historic importance of the occasion, there were no protests by either community. Most Cypriots appeared indifferent to his presence.

It is too early to call the visit a success. After he left last night, radio and television dissected his every utterance for hidden meaning, and local newspapers will do the same today.

Mr Rifkind stood firm on his determination to meet President Glafos Clerides and Mr Denktaş and said the separate meetings had given him a clearer idea of the two sides' feelings and aspirations.

For Mr Denktaş in particular, entertaining a British minister in the Turkish-occupied north was a coup, although he criticised British suggestions that Cyprus's talks on accession to the European Union in 1998 could

be used to persuade Greeks and Turks to reach a quick agreement.

He also said he had been ready for face-to-face talks with Mr Clerides for many months, as the international community has urged, but Mr Clerides had refused to attend a meeting. The Cyprus government says it wants to see general progress first and will not join talks for the sake of public appearances.

Britain and foreign powers are worried by the intercommunal violence and killings in the summer, and by the Greek Cypriots' determination to buy weapons to match those held on the Turkish part of the island and the Turkish mainland.

But Mr Rifkind's warnings about these dangers seem certain to go unheeded.

After many years in which the Cyprus problem failed to arouse foreign interest, the threat of a war which would involve Greece and Turkey, both Nato members, has at last attracted world attention.

Britain has been pushed into high-profile diplomatic activity in part by the United States' "discovery" of Cyprus earlier this year when Washington, because concerned about Greek-Turkish tensions over the Aegean islands.

But time for progress is running out unless there is movement by next September, any activity will be cut short by the Cypriot presidential election, due in February 1998.

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Critics throw book at £1bn French library

The Bibliothèque François Mitterrand will be inaugurated today, but locals and many intellectuals are unhappy, writes Alex Duval Smith in Paris

FIRST there was the pyramid at the Louvre, then the circular opera house at Bastille and the futuristic arch at La Défense. Today, the last and most expensive of President François Mitterrand's building projects — four glass towers housing the French National Library — will be inaugurated in Paris.

But the official opening by President Jacques Chirac this afternoon has already been overshadowed by criticism that the £1 billion Bibliothèque François Mitterrand, as it will be named, is a Pharaonic project out of its time.

Eight years in the making and constructed near Gare d'Austerlitz on the left bank of the Seine, it is a much-needed replacement for the Bibliothèque de France in central Paris which houses between 10 and 12 million books.

These will gradually be transferred to the new glass and hardwood structure, designed by Dominique Perrault, a French architect aged 43, and expected to accommodate 10,000 readers six days a week.

While the building will bring new life to the 13th district — a former industrial area with much wasteland and boarded-up shops — local residents claim it is not the natural home for the library. They also say that public transport provision — eventually to include Paris's 14th metro line — should have been completed by now.

Gerard Conte, a local historian aged 64, who has fought the gentrification of the area since he moved there 37 years ago, said: "This was the industrial heartland of Paris — the place the Germans were still bombing when de Gaulle arrived. It is where Panhard created the first petrol-driven car in 1891, and which was home to the world's biggest sugar refinery."

But others praise the library's arrival, like the owner of the recently spruced-up Europe Café, doing a busy trade yesterday in pastis for the builders putting final touches to the library. "My café has been transformed from a refuge for people who spent three hours over a beer to a brasserie with a brisk trade."

The library itself — four 21-storey towers built to represent open books at each corner of a vast square — has been controversial since it was conceived.

After critics pointed to the danger of exposing priceless books to sunlight, Mr Perrault modified his design, extending the storage areas underground and lining the inside of the towers with hardwood shutters.

Hardwood from Brazil was also used to cover the steps leading to the library. After he reportedly slipped on the steps during a rainy day earlier this year, the library's director, Pierre Favier, insisted that bannisters be installed.

Visitors, who will be admitted from Friday in return for an entrance fee of Fr20 (€2.35), will be met by a luxurious trolley, including deep-pile red carpets and 1,697 "reading stations". These feature

power points for laptop computers, chairs costing €235 and reading lights allegedly costing €200 each.

Intellectuals argue that safeguarding the country's literary heritage has taken second place to architectural whims. The writer Marc Furumail said: "It would have been better to extend the present site in central Paris by buying surrounding buildings. But we had a president who wanted the biggest library in the world."

The historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie believes the new site will create short-term problems because researchers will not have access to their specially-designed reading area until the summer of 1998. "No one will



Bannisters were added to the Brazilian hardwood-covered steps leading to the library at the insistence of the director, after he reportedly slipped in rainy weather

know where all the books are for a while. However, when it is up and running, the computerised indexing system will be second to none."

A problem remains over the funding of the estimated €110million-a-year running cost. Writers have called for annual acquisitions to be increased, while the finance ministry wants them reduced.

Philippe Béral, the director-general of the library, said: "The Library of Congress in Washington acquires

200,000 new books a year and the British Library 100,000. Our maximum has been set at 88,000. My problem is trying to make the finance ministry understand that, at some point, culture and politics cannot mix."

Paris seeks EU role in economies

John Palmer in Brussels

FRANCE and other European Union countries, buoyed by their success in Dublin at the weekend in preparing the single currency, are now canvassing support for a "European economic government".

They want governments in the monetary union to take decisions on key economic issues, including tax and spending, and so act as a counterweight to the power of the planned European central bank.

President Jacques Chirac believes that the governments' finance ministers could meet regularly to plan strategy on economic growth and jobs. Britain or other EU countries opting out of the single currency would be excluded.

The French proposal will be viewed with great suspicion by Britain, which already opposes suggestions that the

single-currency countries for the "single currency" in 1999. He believes this will make it more difficult for Bonn to reject a ministerial council of countries participating in monetary union.

"We do need some kind of 'economic governance' for Europe as we prepare for the single currency era"

of heads of state and government of the countries which are in the euro will constitute this power opposite the central bank," President Chirac said last weekend in Dublin.

Although he claimed there was "broad support" for the idea of a political bloc of single-currency countries, nothing was agreed at the summit.

The French president also predicted that more countries than expected would qualify for the single currency in 1999. He believes this will make it more difficult for Bonn to reject a ministerial council of countries participating in monetary union.

"We do need some kind of 'economic governance' for Europe as we prepare for the single currency era"

well as a strong monetary pillar for EMU and the former secretary of state James Baker, Lawrence Eagleburger and Cyrus Vance along with former senior government officials Zbigniew Brzezinski, Frank Carlucci, Brent Scowcroft, Richard Fairbanks and Robert Strauss. — Reuter.

Minister quits The Norwegian oil and energy minister, Grøe Farnes, resigned yesterday in a scandal over the national intelligence service's surveillance of a left-wing politician, Berge Furre. — Reuter.

Life for killer Charles Rathbun, aged 39, a freelance photographer, was jailed for life in Torrance, California, yesterday without possibility of parole for killing a former National Football League cheerleader, Linda Sobek. — AP.

Neo-Nazis in court Five Swedish neo-Nazis were each jailed for two months in Trollhattan yesterday for in-

Serbs' spirit of protest fails to shake off taint of the past

Julian Borger reports on the democracy party which opposes President Milosevic but shares his nationalist obsessions

ONE parted with Radovan Karadzic at the height of the war and is still evasive on the subject of Bosnian Serb war crimes; the other heads a Serb nationalist party which once had its own paramilitary wing.

Zoran Djindjic and Vuk Draskovic, the leaders of Serbia's democracy movement, are compromised by flirtations with the extreme right, and their politics mirror a nationalist streak in Belgrade's civil rights protests.

Along with the anti-government slogans, there are archaic Serb emblems and traditional two-finger-and-thumb salutes — symbols which accrued horrific connotations in the Bosnian war.

Government officials have been quick to draw attention to this aspect of the protests. Ljubisa Ristic, a member of the ruling leftwing coalition, portrayed them as a "totalist" (ultra-nationalist Serb) assault on Belgrade. The Serbian paragon serves to reinforce the image of President Slobodan Milosevic as the sole guarantor of the Dayton peace accord in Bosnia.

But more independent commentators in Belgrade maintain that protesters' nationalism is a residue of the Milosevic regime, which spent years stirring up "Only by establishing a free press, open debate and the rule of the law — the argument runs — can Serbia and the rest of the Balkans 'grow out' of ethnic chauvinism."

On the Belgrade streets, where a samizdat press circulates, there are already signs of change. On Friday night, tens of thousands of protesters held a minute's silence for an ethnic Albanian teacher killed by the police in the Kosovo region. Such a gesture would have been unthinkable before the protests began.

But a defensive sense of national identity remains — a belief that the world is united against the Serbs. Protesters demanding free local elections are often reluctant to condemn a murderous and repressive Serb regime in Bosnia, only three hours' drive away.

Srboljub Bosovic, a theology student on the daily marches through Belgrade, is a fan of Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb wartime leader. His reasoning is simple: "Karadzic is against Milosevic. I support him because of that."

Colonel escapes Colonel Muhammad Marwa, one of the closest aides of Nigeria's military ruler General Sani Abacha, narrowly escaped a bomb attack as he was driving along a road in Lagos yesterday. — Reuter.

Hostage dispute Chechen gunmen who took 22 Russian troops hostage were holding out for an apology yesterday while Russian and Chechen officials tried to resolve the dispute. The Russian soldiers were captured at their guard post after trying to prevent about 40 Chechens from taking weapons across the border to Dagestan. — AP.

'Godfather' jailed A court in Toulon, France, jailed Maurice Arreckx, aged 79, a former political boss who liked to be called "the Godfather", for two years yesterday on charges of taking kickbacks on a construction contract. — Reuter.

Djindjic seems unlikely to perform any better than President Milosevic, who has so far failed to deliver any of the suspects, in clear contravention of the Dayton accord.

"The procedure is not entirely clear," Mr Djindjic said. "What are the criteria for the indictments, for example? I have a real problem with these questions, so I can't give a clear answer."

Mr Draskovic, Zajedno's second leading figure, has consistently condemned the actions of the Bosnian Serb leadership. But his Serbian Renewal Movement was one of the crutches of militant nationalism at the start of the war. Its paramilitary wing, the Serbian Guard, marched off to fight in Croatia in 1991.



Vuk Draskovic: wallows in Serb romanticism



Zoran Djindjic: at party with Radovan Karadzic

He points out that the only Zajedno leader to have remained aloof from nationalist politics, Vesna Pestic, has seen her Civic Alliance withdraw from circles of urban intellectuals.

Serbia's nationalists and democrats were flung together by the regime's own ideological zig-zags. After six years of promoting rabid Serb nationalism, President Milosevic ditched his gun-toting protégés in 1993 when he believed Serb aims could be pursued no further.

Stevan Niksic, a commentator on NIN magazine, thinks Mr Djindjic's fling with the Bosnian Serbs represented opportunism rather than ideological inclination.

"Djindjic is close to Clinton, as a postmodern politician. He really believes in nothing," he said. Unsurprisingly many students — the vanguard of Zajedno's support — are confused.

Leader's surrender sets back Corsican separatists

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

BONNIE and Clyde adventure — Corsican-style — came to an abrupt end yesterday when the island's most infamous separatist leader gave himself up within hours of police thwarting his girlfriend's getaway.

Francis Santoni, leader of the A Cuncolta Naziunale movement, reportedly left the brushland where he had been living for months and surrendered to the police in Bastia.

Marie-Hélène Mattei, his girlfriend, had been arrested earlier at Bastia airport by terrorist investigators. The interior ministry said a pump-action shotgun and a bullet-proof vest were found in Miss Mattei's home.

The arrest is a significant breakthrough for the government, which argues that the Corsican independence movement is a mafia front.

Miss Mattei, a lawyer who specialises in defending separatists and is secretary-general of A Cuncolta — the official arm of the banned Historical Wing of the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC-CB) — was arrested in connection with a bomb attack last Thursday against the

island's Sperone golf club. The attack, which did not cause any casualties, prompted the owner of the golf club, Jacques Dewez, to give police details of extortion attempts by A Cuncolta.

He is believed to have named Miss Mattei as an intermediary. Significantly — because it is almost unheard of in Corsica —

Chirac made it clear that he disapproved of negotiations

sica for extortion victims to go to the authorities — Mr Dewez's move allowed the police to arrest six people and launch a hunt for Miss Mattei.

The police action followed a television promise by President Jacques Chirac last Thursday to order a clampdown on Corsican separatists. President Chirac made it clear that he disapproved of government negotiation with the separatists — a common approach in the last 20 years of violence on the island. A Cuncolta is one of three separatist groups on the

island. The tourism industry has suffered extensively from repeated bombing campaigns against holiday villages and public buildings.

Mr Santoni, who is not believed to be wanted in connection with the attack on the golf club, had been on the run for more than a year after being sentenced in absentia to four months' jail on arms possession charges.

He appeared in a television interview on Friday, urging talks with President Chirac.

Corsica has been independent for only three years in its history. During the Mediterranean wars, its strategic position meant it changed hands frequently, and for a short time in the 18th century it was British. After it became French during the Napoleonic wars, the Corsican people were subjected to years of discrimination and pauperising policies.

J.P. Smith

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When posturing rules

They don't govern: just cringe to Europhobes

YESTERDAY showed just why British policy towards Europe will now remain permanently paralysed as long as there is a minority Conservative government. The Westminster agenda was dominated by three grim Europe-related encounters, which individually and cumulatively sap the Tories' credibility to speak for Britain. First, the Prime Minister reported back from the Dublin summit and was promptly forced to run the usual deadening gauntlet of Eurosceptic backbench hostility. Then, Douglas Hogg announced a humiliating change of policy over the BSE cattle cull. Finally, last night the annual debate on the common fisheries policy was heading towards yet another close division, with ministers frantically applying sticking plaster concessions to keep their vote together. The whole process was made visibly more difficult by the arrival in the Commons of the latest Labour MP, the victor of last week's Barnsley East by-election.

Of these three events, by far the meatiest was Mr Hogg's about-face on the beef cull. Six months ago at Florence, the Government claimed that it had struck a deal which would lead to the progressive lifting of the beef export ban by November. Today, November has been and gone, and yet not a single clause of the beef ban has been lifted or varied since Florence. That was why Mr Hogg had to come to the Commons yesterday and announce the selective cull that the Government has always previously argued was unnecessary and unjustifiable. It was a shocking announcement in every way. Mr Hogg condemned a further 100,000 cattle to slaughter yesterday. It was, the agriculture secretary confessed, not a scientific decision but a political one. That is disturbing enough in itself. But what is even more serious is that it should have taken so long to face up to the need for this unsavoury approach. It was obvi-

ous in the spring that if ministers seriously wanted to end the export ban they would have to allow such a cull. They have wasted eight months avoiding this choice and it will be many more before the ban is lifted.

As a case study in bad policy-making, the BSE crisis is hard to beat. But the reason why the policy has been so shabby and inconsistent is because of the anti-European and even xenophobic mood on the Conservative backbenches and in the right-wing press. Their influence has been wholly counter-productive. The pragmatic, problem-solving options have been consistently neglected because the Government has preferred to cringe towards the Europhobes rather than to defend and advance British interests. Yesterday, finally, the Government took the practical policy option rather than the fantasy path. It was appropriate that barely any of the Tory Europhobe MPs bothered to stay and listen to Mr Hogg. They have lost interest in beef.

The Europhobes paralyse policy and never advance it. Now that their attention has shifted away from beef it may be possible to make progress when agriculture ministers meet today to respond to yesterday's announcement. Too little progress, and too late, but progress nevertheless. The new victim of the Europhobes' destructive obsession is British policy towards the single currency. Once again, they have managed to force the Government into a series of postures towards Europe rather than allow ministers to represent British interests in European negotiations. On beef, it was the empty chair. On monetary union, it is to rule out options. Mr Major's statement yesterday, with the hint in its final sentence that British withdrawal from the EU might even be on the agenda, shows where this unprincipled and irresponsible approach ultimately aims.

Boeing bids to rule the skies

The Airbus could fight back: but it must get its act together

THE merger of Boeing — the largest manufacturer of civilian aircraft — with the military might of McDonnell Douglas creates a planemaker of awesome potential which has ominous implications for Europe. While the EU has been preoccupied with convergence criteria for the euro, the US has been regrouping its industries — like telecommunications and aerospace — in order to exploit the opportunities of globalisation. Europe must realise that, however important it is to agree a "strong" currency, it is even more important to strengthen the region's wealth-creating base without which no currency will ever be strong. While US planemakers are positioning themselves for the next century, Europe's Airbus consortium can't even agree on the shape of the company. The British and German stakeholders want to escape from the bureaucratic structure in which each partner is guaranteed work. But France is refusing to allow Aerospace's assets to be put into the new limited company that is supposed to make Airbus more competitive.

Europe can't allow itself the luxury of a long debate on whether Airbus should be independent and whether it should have a joint military-civilian capability like Boeing (though why not?). It must get its act together now or be swamped in the marketplace — presuming the anti-trust authorities don't spoil the party. Boeing not only takes over McDonnell's customer base (to add to its 60 per cent world market share) but the

deal removes McDonnell as a possible collaborator with Airbus on the next generation of 580-plus jumbos. Unless Europe gets its act together, Boeing will have a complete monopoly of the next generation of large planes — a point which ought not to be lost on the US anti-trust authorities. The Airbus project has been a resounding physical, if not yet financial, success story. From a standing start it now has over 20 per cent of the world market in an advanced-technology sector. In this instance, it has happened not because of market forces but because of old-fashioned government intervention. Now things have got to change — and fast. Ownership doesn't in the end matter much, but structure and flexibility do. The consortium must turn itself quickly into a single company in control of as many manufacturing operations as it would like, and free to streamline the corporation to maximise efficiency, even if this means that allocation of contracts is no longer done by buggins turn. The splintered nature of the Airbus operation suggests that there may be lots of cost savings that can be made to meet the challenge of Boeing. The consortium must also urgently seek new partners, probably in the Far East, to ensure there is an effective second force to Boeing — which in future will have access to even more defence subsidies. Otherwise aircraft buyers will find themselves at the mercy of a monopolist. That means only one thing. Higher prices.

Sweetening the bitter lemons

There is a solution to the Cyprus problem: mediation is vital

MALCOLM Rifkind should not arouse such instant cynicism for having sped to Cyprus and back with a new 10-point plan. True, his plan is based on fine platitudes and his "two-day visit" is really an overnight stay. But to suggest that Mr Rifkind seeks to win Cypriot votes in north London by his initiative is naive. The Greek Cypriots will be outraged that he is the first British foreign secretary to set foot in northern Cyprus since the armed takeover in 1974; the Turkish Cypriots will suspect him of trying to revive an old sphere of influence. He will not win many votes by this route either in Stoke Newington or Haringey.

Yet there is nothing wrong with Britain trying to build on previous efforts by the US and the UN — so long as it moves the problem forward rather than backward. The concept of a bizonal, bicameral federation has long been accepted but, as in the case of Bosnia, the

devil lies in the incompatible detail which is pursued by both sides. Mr Rifkind's formula insists that there will be no domination of the federation by either side. He also holds out the carrot of accession to the EU on terms which are of benefit to "all the people of the island." The problem is how to persuade Greek Cypriots that this is not a backdoor way of giving the other side a veto; while convincing the Turkish Cypriots that this will not mean domination from the south. The larger obstacles lie in the worsening atmosphere between the parent nations. Athens looks askance at rising Islamic influence in Ankara. The Turks complain that Greece is rearming its compatriots while Tansu Ciller flies to Moscow today to complain of reported Greek Cypriot plans to buy Russian ground missiles. Aegean problems need an Aegean approach; that is where the mediation effort should be applied.

Final Indignity No. 402



Letters to the Editor

Let's hear it for the big E

THE debate on a unified European currency is being reduced to the level of the nursery, in which we frighten ourselves with bogeymen (Major trails in euro's wake, December 14). This could be reversed if two simple changes were made to the present plans.

1. Abandon the name euro. Apart from the side issue of its banality, it is the expunging of the national-currency names that seems to be having as much effect on public opinion as forced amalgamation.

There can be no real problem with each nation retaining its own name for the European currency unit — the prefix "new" might be needed for a few years, as with our decimalisation and when France revalued the franc.

2. Subject to a few constraints, let each country produce its own notes. These constraints would be that the denominations and sizes are standardised, perhaps also the general colour range and, most importantly, the appearance of the numeric denomination.

All national moneys could then be accommodated; we could have our Queen's head and our cricket matches, the Germans their severe feel or the French the art nouveau style of their present notes. The circulation of multiple types of notes in Scotland and, in days of pound/punt parity, in Ireland demonstrate that this would be a practical scheme.

These changes would, at a

stroke, remove the trivial opposition which presently excludes reasoned debate. Progress to monetary union could continue on course.

Pat O'Neill
1 Surlinton Road,
Eastleigh,
Hampshire SO50 4HY.

THE examples of the Government fudging the figures to ensure that it meets the Maastricht criteria for monetary union are not only those cited by Michael Allen (Letter, December 11). Even more blatantly than its use of the Private Finance Initiative, the Government counts certain items as "negative expenditure", which helps it artificially to keep down the PSBR total.

For example, the proceeds from selling one-and-a-half million council houses have been treated as negative expenditure and have reduced the PSBR by nearly £20 billion. Most recently, the sale of Ministry of Defence homes and of the Housing Corporation lease portfolio have been treated in the same way.

The income generated is greater than the proceeds from privatising BT, British Gas and the electricity industry put together. Yet by treating it all as negative expenditure, the Government not only keeps down the PSBR but evades the need to earmark any of these funds to reinvest in new homes.

A sensible economic framework would recognise that assets have a value (in generating rent) and that, if sold,

they may need to be replaced. Not only does a government obsessed with borrowing targets ignore this need, it compounds the folly by subjecting the housing programme to the biggest cut of all those imposed in the Budget.

John Perry,
Director of Policy,
Chartered Institute of Housing,
Octavia House,
Westwood Way,
Coventry CV4 8JP.

SURRENDERING control of Britain's economy to a European central bank dominated by Germany, as advocated by John Monks (Why we need Europe, December 13), is like surrendering the right to strike on the promise that the employer will be kind to you in the future.

If anyone doubts that the single currency means the complete surrender of economic decision-making, just ask the Shadow Chancellor why he promises to reduce VAT on fuel to 9 per cent and not 4, 3 or nil per cent. He will reply that this is the minimum permissible under current EU regulations. If this is the case now, imagine the effect of full monetary union.

John Monks has no business becoming a cheerleader for the single currency. The TUC General Council must take him to task.

Fawad Ibrahim,
National Executive,
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education,
Britannia Street,
London WC1X 9JP.

How to get this voting issue into proportion

JOHN Gray is right to make the link between constitutional change and electoral reform (How to keep the new right out in the cold, December 15). If supporters of devolution are serious about entrenchment for a Scottish Parliament, a proportional voting system for the Commons is the best guarantor: the prospect of an anti-devolution government coming to power will be that much more remote.

But keeping such a government out of power is only one objective. It is also important that parties are represented across the regions and nations of the UK in proportion to their support.

At the 1992 election, for example, the Labour Party polled one-tenth of its total vote in Scotland and slightly more in the South-east of England. Yet 20 per cent of Labour MPs represent Scottish seats and only 1 per cent represent seats in the South-east. It is little wonder that Nationalists try to persuade Scots that the South-east is invariably Tory-voting?

It is doubtful whether the Alternative Vote (AV) or Supplementary Vote (SV) canvassed by Gray can offer representation to Conservative voters in Glasgow and Manchester, Labour supporters in the South-east and Liberal Fawad Ibrahim. National Democrats more clearly in line with votes. The search for a new system should instead begin with the Additional Member System (AMS) proposed by IPFR in 1991 and since adopted by the Scottish Constitutional Convention. James McCornick,
Research Fellow,
Institute for Public Policy Research,
30-32 Southampton Street,
London WC2E 7RA.

AN Aitken's polemic against New Zealand-style PR (PR turns politics upside-down, December 12) is based on an unstated, but arguably fallacious, piece of reasoning. In New Zealand, PR has forced a "highly unpopular" premier to govern in coalition, modifying some of his key policies in the process. Yet Aitken is, by using this as an argument against PR, tacitly defending a system that would have let Bolger retain absolute power. Henry Lawson,
18 Barrington Way,
Reading, Berkshire RG1 6EG.

AFTER an election, political parties can always range on their pledges to the voters, whatever the voting system. That has happened this year in Australia, where they do not have PR in federal elections, but Alternative (or Preferential) Voting. Under John Howard, the incoming coalition of Liberal and National parties pursuing policies opposite from those for which they campaigned.

The same is not unknown in this country — or in the US. It is not PR which is not fair, but the politicians. R J M Tolhurst,
Flat 52, The Vineyards,
Great Baddow, Chelmsford,
Essex CM2 7QS.

WHY does Ian Aitken give currency to the idea that John Smith pledged a referendum on PR? The promise was for a referendum on electoral reform. Donald Cochran,
11 Kelsborough Way,
Kelsall, Cheshire CW5 0NL.

We regret we cannot acknowledge receipt of letters. We may edit them: shorter ones are more likely to appear.

Taiwan, a challenge in the East

MARTIN Woollacott is mostly half right in attributing the blame for Hong Kong's demise to the failure of the Western political community (Unhappy dawn for the new Hong Kong, December 14). The only thing that could have checked the incursion of Chinese Stalinism into Hong Kong would have been the operation of a full-blown, Western-style democratic system there, of some decades standing.

The fact that this did not develop was not especially the fault of successive British governments. What colonial power has ever, of its own accord, given the colonised their freedom? The fault lies largely with the people of Hong Kong themselves, who,

for various reasons, failed to fight for democracy until it was too late.

Having failed the test of Hong Kong, the international political community (including Japan) must not fail the greater test of Taiwan. If the interests of big business are allowed to continue to dictate policy towards China, then Taiwan will become the Sudebank of Asia and, just like Nazi Germany in this century, China will surely emerge as the number one geopolitical problem for the early decades of the next. Jeffrey Henderson,
Forum Lecturer in Sociology,
University of Hong Kong,
Manchester Business School,
Booth Street West,
Manchester M15 6PB.

A Country Diary

SOMERSET: Rural travel in December has its own hazards. A woman who usually pedals laboriously uphill, equipped with luminous cross-straps, has prudently taken to walking; it gives her a better chance of jumping up the bank when a lorry looms out of the fog, round a sharp bend. In 1961, an early snowfall cut off villages for weeks. We could not get home to Bruton. On December 29, a man, who kept pigs on land eight miles from his dairy farm, was finishing work under cover at the pigery when he saw snow falling outside and stowed a shovel and 20 cornsacks in the back of his pick-up van as a precaution. At midnight he was ready to go home. He found the cornsacks already covered with snow and useless for warmth. After two miles, snow covered the windscreen and he had to stop. In the next hush, he made a little headway until the narrow track was

blocked by an abandoned car. He covered his head and most of his body with paper sacks to face a night in the cab. At 6.15 the storm abated. He forced the door open and struggled through soft, drifted snow, sinking up to the armpits, before scrambling over the roadside hedge and somehow reaching a cowshed, shelter, and a fire. By 7.45, it was light enough to go on. He reached home at 11.25. Others would tend the cows, so, after a meal, his task was to get straight back to the pigs. A second epic walk through snowdrifts finished at 5.25. On the way, he passed his buried vehicle. He lodged near the pigs for 16 days without a change of clothes. It was a privilege to talk to the man who had endured all this, and written a wonderfully full, unadorned account of the experience in a letter which he wrote to a Yorkshire friend and kindly let me see.

JOHN VALLINS

Namedropper

I AM intrigued by the reference by Barrie Heads (Letters, December 13) to "the entirely fictitious T Lowingham Sproat" described as "a retired British Railways executive".

My father was Lowingham Sproat, without the T. He was a railway executive, was operating officer for the North-east area (I think) and was awarded the MBE in 1960, the year of his retirement. He was most certainly not fictitious. Margaret A Sproat,
Lindenhaugh,
Humshaugh,
Barnham,
Northumberland NE46 4AG.

SURNAMES don't have to be long to be bizarre. When I was a local councillor some years ago, my electoral register and the show-biz but memorable, Min Spanger, Minnie Mole and Irma Titl. Also, the entirely splendid and non-bizarre Bess Quartermain, who should have been a pirate but was a spiritualist. Robin Ford,
Spring Cottage,
Undercliff Drive,
St Lawrence,
Isle of Wight PO33 1UW.

THOSE seeking further examples of curious personal names need look no further than the credit list of any Hollywood movie. I checked the list for the film Tremors and found the following:

Geoffrey Hagenbuckle,
Jesus "Chewy" Peres, Frank Diaz de Lion, H Weezee Mercier, Blayne Shina, Aaron Glascock, Ezra Dwock, Dorcas Pratt, Mike Topocozan and the Flying Fabriz Sisters, who were apparently responsible for make-up and hair. Peter Moverley,
12 Stanley Gardens,
Oldland Common,
Bristol BS15 6PZ.

MY aunt knew a Florence Ebb who married a Mr Sloe. Flo Ebb became Flo Sloe. S Parish,
1a Fitzherbert Street,
Warrington WA2 7QG.



Money and the movies

THE conclusion to the debate over film quality v success lies in your sports supplements (December 13). "Western-style democracies will have won [BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award] ... but didn't, didn't because votes, like box-office receipts, don't measure quality."

Arnold Schwarzenegger's new film may be top of the UK box-office charts but it's still fodder for the culturally challenged. Conversely, Secrets and Lies — universally acclaimed by the critics — grossed only a small fraction of the Jingle millions. But which film will still be watchable second or third time round, 10, 20, 30 years on? Consider, say, Brief Encounter in terms of its initial box-office impact and its longevity. More important, which film genuinely appeals to the majority of filmgoers? Do they really prefer brain-dead, computerised special ef-

fects to drama about human beings? Or are they prevented by the machinations of the film industry from seeing films of real quality? Fred Aikman,
4 The Ryde,
Henfield, Herts AL9 5DE.

IT is about time the video industry fought the British Board of Film Classification and politicians on cynical moral campaigns. If I spend £13 on a film, I expect nothing less than the full product. How many people who bought Trainspotting, for instance, know that 14 seconds were excised from the video version? If, as you report (December 12), "several recent violent cinema releases are likely to receive significant cuts when classified for video in the New Year", I hope we are told which ones. John Donnelly,
100 Mure Avenue,
Kilmarnock, Ayrshire KA5 1TT.

The minister is the message

A NEW disease threatens to engulf us, one that originated in politicians, but has crossed the species boundary and shown up in members of the clergy: a compulsion to use the phrase "make it [absolutely] clear". The worst case so far is that of Tony Baldry MP. On Monday's Today programme, he used the phrase 12 times in under three minutes. Bishop Jim Thompson then proved himself to have been infected: in not much more than a minute he used the phrase two or three times. Yet the severity with which a vic-

tim will manifest the symptoms appears to be in inverse relation to his or her capacity for clear-speaking. (Dr) Philip Roy,
Flat 2, Harold Road,
London NE7 0DE.

Another Manifesto, our open-access series for readers to inject constructive ideas into political debate, is seeking bright ideas for arts and media policies. What would a new government do? Brief proposals, please, to send by manifesto at the address or fax number above (e-mail manifesto@guardian.co.uk)

صبراً من الامل

Diary
Matthew Norman

DON'T be bamboozled by the wild, man-of-rock facade: there is also an avuncular, pipe-and-slippers side to the Diary's pop correspondent John Redwood. John's new hobby is treating Tory candidates for safe seats to lunch. Sometimes turning up with three slick young men in tow, he takes an especially keen interest in their views on monetary pledges about the single currency, and encourages them to speak freely about members of the Government. Now, who can guess the name of the copycat with the same hobby? Yes, it's Defence Secretary Polly Perrott. One candidate reports that the invitation from Polly arrived within days of lunch with John, and it may not be long before someone sits with both on the same day. Along with this starry-eyed task to make Tory friends feel at home, the two men have much in common: both, for example, are absolutely loyal to John Major, and neither can foresee a leadership election in many years to come. Aren't they a pair of absolute sweeties?

I AM pleased to learn that my chunky chum Bruce Anderson is branching out into comedy. Political pundit Bruce - catchphrase: What do expenses make? Calorie! - featured here on Friday for the £200 dinner he and Alan Watkins shared at the Connaught with David Willetts. On Sunday, meanwhile, without the remotest need for an airlift, Bruce went to the Midlands for Central TV's live debate show It's Your Show, to argue the government line over whether people are becoming richer or poorer. When Labour's David Winnick used the Connaught blow-out to question Bruce's credentials as an expert on poverty, he replied: "So what? It gives work to the people who work at the Connaught." The studio audience erupted into laughter, and Central is now considering him as a replacement should Les Dennis ever retire from Family Fortunes.

WITH pictures of the Evita premiere in all the papers, my thoughts turn to Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber. When last we met Andrew at a first night (of Jesus Christ Superstar), he had the Gents cleared so he could void his bladder in solitude, so we rang that most equitable of FR men Sir Tim Ball - his companion that night - for guidance. "No, I wasn't with him at Evita," said Sir Tim. "and no, I don't know if he went to the Gents." Is it true that Andrew has started taking pills, like Her Majesty the Queen, to postpone bodily functions during public appearances? And if not would he consider a catheter? "Look, I've got bored with this whole story, and I'd drop it if I were you." In that case, would Sir Tim have a Christmas message for our loyal army of readers? "No, I would not," said Sir Tim. "I have no desire to feature in your Diary whatsoever." Not very seasonal.

LAST-minute contender comes forward to challenge Sir Tim as PR of the Year. It is Nuclear Electric, which sends a press release about the "beautiful ballad" it has sponsored in time for the Christmas charts. I have the lyric of Hartlepool Together before me now. Here is verse one. "Because it's Hartlepool. Where we're born and where we die/ Because it's Hartlepool. Where we're proud to be alive/ And the townfolk will sing. As we all begin/ A bright future indeed." We would have asked Oofy Wegg-Prosser what the town's MP has to say, but since he is on rapid-rebuttal strike we couldn't.

LORENA Bobbitt has been treated like royalty on a visit to Ecuador, reports Marie Claire, where a VIP reception was followed by dinner with President Abdala Bucaram. "Meeting you in person is an extremely high honour. You are a person who knows how to defend her principles," said the President, before presenting her with a copy of his new rock CD, A Mad Man In Love. As for Mrs Bobbitt's own musical career, she is believed to be forming a new band called the Slice Girls.



Soldiers damaged by poisonous politics

Commentary
Hugo Young

AS AN apologist for government incompetence, verging on the criminal, Nicholas Soames was a new face at the despatch box. The cast of defendants had become familiar. Last week, it was time for the hair-splitting of Ian Lang on the Scott Report, the furious hauteur of Douglas Hogg on RSI, the wearisome defensiveness from John Major and Michael Heseltine on a daily basis, here was a man with a different approach. But the experiment was not successful. As a response to the events of the six years since the Gulf war, the Defence Minister's unique mix of bombast, pseudo-piety and rippling self-congratulation was an experience so frightful as to make one look back more fondly on the agonised castles of William Wallace.

blame Conservatives for everything that's gone wrong, a way of thinking which implies that under new management everything, or at least the most obviously scandalous things, will be different. But the grim saga of Gulf war syndrome, on which Mr Soames was pouring his inimitable balm, tells another story. Every day, more evidence emerges of what government-as-government, MoD-as-MoD, irrespective of politicians who transiently occupy it, has the institutional habit of perpetrating.

knows for sure whether Gulf war syndrome really exists. That much can be agreed. More than a thousand veterans claim to have been made ill, and 26 have died, but the symptoms have varied, and the cited causes of contamination have ranged from depleted uranium stockpiles and smoke from burning oil-wells to a collection of possible acts of negligence by medical and military authorities, principally vaccinations that went wrong and insecticides that were unsafe for human contact. There is no sure pattern, no epidemiological proof. But that was six years ago. What we do know is that something happened. What we also know is that under the impetuous nature of the medical evidence, the body politic has followed a pattern at the same time predictable and astonishing. Every week produces new evidence. This week we had the disclosure that official MoD papers contained what neither ministers nor public were allowed to know: that malathion, which can cause irreversible nerve damage, was an ingredient of a de-lousing powder issued to British troops, which itself "may have been stored in contravention" of regulations. But this is just the most recent episode in a series including two traits of "government", against which "politics" is meant to offer a modicum of protection. The first is concealment. The very

existence of lethal pesticides in the armoury of British Gulf soldiers was hidden from the serving ministers for most of six years. This didn't involve a conspiracy, the Ministry declares. It's still trying to find out how the information-chain failed, it bleats. It doesn't seem to mind how laughably this insults the intelligence of anyone who recalls the smooth-tongued military doctors who appeared time and again on television to reassure any Gulf veteran who appeared above the parapet that they had no reason to blame any illness, however dire and specific, on their military service. I remember them now, smiling, reassuring, hard as nails. These were doctors paid not for scientific inquiry but for cloning in "science" the only answer the MoD, as an institution, could tolerate.

The grim saga of Gulf war syndrome, on which Mr Soames is pouring his balm, tells another story

quity. Having said there was nothing worth inquiring into, it now starts an investigation that will take three years. It's at the end of this that Mr Soames' magnificent compensation comes into play. But note the sequence. The pay-out depends on proven negligence. But negligence can't begin to be established until completion of the inquiry has taken the MoD six years - and then only under pressure from its own cover being cracked - to institute. A decade will

run its span before these victims of Her Majesty's Service find out whether their plethora of unattractive conditions was just the luck of the draw, and the pesticides the MoD knew all along it was recklessly exposing them to had, after all, no significant effect upon them.

One limb of the body politic has been exposed as reasonably healthy. The Commons select committee on defence is the chief source of exposure of some of these facts. It's one of the few places where a voice of outrage has been heard that is commensurate to the damage inflicted on the soldiers. Through politicians like Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat, and the Labour MP Lew Smith, a challenge has been raised to the prevailing assumption that, although something terrible has happened, the burden of proof as to its precise and incontestable cause lies entirely with the victims and not with the great power for whom they were working at the time.

This is the contention Nicholas Soames was put up to defend. Having made his apology for the previous deceptions, he remains silent about each new disclosure. It is as if the apology cleans the slate, and the three-year inquiry forestalls the need for interim explanations. The machine is quite determined to give no quarter. Nothing must be allowed to violate the presumption that the machine is in all cases innocent until proved otherwise. It says, when pressed, that it does this on behalf of the people. It must save their money, guard their interest, protect them against the unimaginable consequences of permitting a precedent of culpability and compensation to be established. The machine is over, unless the politician overrides it. That's the point of the minister, who is called a politician. Politics is heavy duty, in any party.

The right not to be offended by Michael Howard



Isabel Hilton

IF ALL goes according to plan, by the end of this week, thanks to the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, the United Nations will have a new declaration. It is designed, Mr Howard says, to allow us all to sleep easier in our beds, and I'm sure we're all grateful. In fact, as the season of goodwill approaches, perhaps the Guardian's readers should drop the Home Secretary a card. Something simple would do, just a thank you for making the world a safer place.

Mr Howard has been worrying about the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. This states that people with a well-grounded fear of persecution have the right to apply for asylum, and right-minded countries (like this one) have a duty to grant it. That's not just any old person, of course. A certain amount of evidence - quite a lot, in the case of the Home Office - is required to show that applicants are not just interested in enjoying a life of luxury at the expense of the UK's social-security budget. And if an applicant has done anything that's contrary to the principles of the United Nations - throwing petrol bombs at dictators' cars, that kind of thing - then he or she can be refused, as can war criminals, convicted non-political criminals and anyone who poses a danger to the national security of the host country.

But Mr Howard does not think that's enough to keep us safe: as he put it yesterday morning, with that lawyer's ingenuity so admired by our judges, one of our most fundamental human rights is the right to be free of the fear of terrorism. He put this point to the G-7 summit in Paris earlier this year, and everyone was so impressed that he went ahead and drafted the resolution that is to be voted on by the UN General Assembly. The resolution says that the planning, incitement and funding of terrorism are against the principles of the United Nations. That should keep them out. Who exactly? Convicted terrorists? No, actually they're kept out under the existing arrangements. The people we are worried about now are those who haven't been tried or convicted, but who we just know are up to no good.

Take Dr al-Mas'ari, for example. Dr al-Mas'ari was not only annoying the government of Saudi Arabia from these shores, he was doing it in such an underhand way

that there were no grounds whatever for expelling him from the UK, and that was very bad for business. Or that notorious Sikh gentleman, Saranjit Singh Chahal, whom the Government in its concern for our safety detained for six years without trial because of its belief that he was mixed up in funny business in India. We would all be safe from Mr Chahal still if the European Court of Human Rights hadn't insisted he be released. Two further worrying guests of HM Government have been released as a result of that judgment, which is the kind of unwarranted interference the Home Office is up against. Fortunately, Mr Howard's vigilance has prevailed.

Or has it? I'm not sure that Mr Howard holds the European Court of Human Rights in very high regard, given the court's worrying tendency to find against Britain in its judgments. But since Britain is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, the court's judgments are binding. On November 15, the court ruled in favour of Mr Chahal had been a terrorist (which he denies), there would still be no justification for returning him to a situation in which he was likely to be tortured. In fact, it held this principle to be so fundamental that it did not examine what it called the British government's "untested, but no doubt bona fide, allegations against him". Acknowledging what they called "the immense difficulties faced by the states in modern times in protecting their communities from terrorist violence", the judges nevertheless affirmed that "even in these circumstances, the (European) Convention prohibited the absolute torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, irrespective of the person in question." (Emphasis added.)

As a lawyer, Mr Howard needs nobody to explain that, even had Mr Chahal's hands been dripping with blood, he cannot now be sent back to a country in which he risks being tortured. This raises the question, then, of which carries more legal weight - Mr Howard's latest addition to the paperwork of the United Nations, which he presented yesterday morning as a blow for our right to sleep in our beds without fear of the presence of annoying foreigners on our shores, or the European Convention for Human Rights? Yes, you've guessed it. It's the European Convention - now, in some legal opinion, considerably strengthened as a result of the Chahal case.

I wonder what Mr Howard could have meant, then, when he said his resolution was significant. It couldn't be that it is just a significant exercise in public relations at the taxpayer's expense, with no legal weight whatsoever, could it?



Simon Beavis and Mark Milner argue that EU planemakers have lessons to learn from the Boeing merger - co-operate politically and market globally, or die

Tomorrow the world

LAST WEEK European Union leaders spent 17 hours locked in negotiations to coordinate the interests of what were then two of the most strategic industries, steel and coal. Forty-odd years on from the formation of the European Coal and Steel Commission, the industrial policy agenda is driven by the competitive pressures of globalisation. But the EU shows little of that vision today when it comes to dealing with the real rather than the phoney issues on which Europe's future depends.

Europe does have an impressive base in the aerospace industry. Look no further than Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace in the UK, Aerospaciale and Saucma in France, Daimler-Benz Aerospace (DASA) in Germany. Look above all else, at Airbus Industrie - the four-nation consortium which has mounted such a strong challenge to the US airliner makers that one of them, McDonnell Douglas, has been forced into the arms of the other, Boeing. Just how desperately McDonnell Douglas needed this weekend's merger was underlined by its willingness to abandon its own proud name and wrap itself in the Boeing flag. But the success of Airbus is both the exception which proves the rule as well as being an illustration of the problems which bedevil the industry in Europe.

Airbus has always been a cumbersome beast in the corporate world, with the partners dividing the workload on the basis of their shareholdings rather than manufacturer efficiency. But efforts by Airbus to replace the old structure by a more conventional linear company structure have run into problems. The three main partners, Aerospaciale, BAE and DASA are said to be deeply divided over reform, but until they can agree to sink their differences they are stuck with a structure designed for political expediency, not economic efficiency.

That is hardly surprising. The aerospace industry is inherently political. High politics, international in scope, are the constant backdrop against which the industry operates. It is these things which dictate the sector's fortunes and the livelihoods of the hundreds of thousands of people who depend on it. Europe's politicians have, in the past, recognised the need to bring the community's disparate industrial interests together. So Europe has Concordo, the Tornado, the Airbus family and, latterly, the Eurofighter. But beyond that handful the politics of real commercial co-operation have proved trickier.

IN defence, governments have proved unwilling to take even the most minor steps towards integration if sovereignty and strategic independence are threatened. Never mind a common EU defence and foreign policy, it has been hard enough to develop a consistent and shared line on the procurement of single items of military hardware. The hurdles to doing so are partly ideological. A pro-privatisation, Eurosceptic defence

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Sir Laurens van der Post

Wise man of Africa

LAURENS van der Post, who has died aged 90, was a man of many achievements, public and private. He was an Afrikaner and, by long residence and cultural familiarity, also a European. He had been a soldier and a prisoner of war who discovered and preached forgiveness for his enemies. He was a farmer who became a writer, a journalist and also an internationally successful novelist and film-maker.

He was a traveller who explored Africa, a philosopher who embraced psychoanalysis, a secret diplomat and the confidante of princes and — said his critics — a South African liberal who became a bit of a reactionary (but that wasn't really true...). His life always brought together literature and public affairs.

He was born in the Orange Free state, the 13th of 15 children of a distinguished Afrikaner family; his father was Dutch, a prominent lawyer, his mother a member of one of South Africa's oldest Huguenot families. Van der Post was to return again and again in his books to this upbringing on the edge of the Kalahari Desert: he often explained his Bushman nurse was a character in his life.

At 17, he became a journalist, he wrote frequently about this period of his life. At 20 he was briefly associated with Roy Campbell and William Plomer and later wrote about that journey — with fascinating discrepancies in the reportage.

Thereafter, the pre-war period appears to have been difficult. Van der Post married Marjorie Wendt in South Africa in 1928. They had two children. He came to London, then returned to South Africa to work on the Cape Times, where he combined farming in Gloucestershire with freelance journalism. He also wrote his first novel, *In A Province*, which was published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press in 1934. This was one of the earliest fictional indictments by an Afrikaner of what was to become apartheid — worthy of comparison with Plomer's *Turbid Wolf* — and

it was well-received, but van der Post had not yet come into his own. When war broke out, he immediately enlisted and was soon commissioned. He served first in Ethiopia (an experience which he would write about only many years later in *The Voice of the Thunder*, 1963), then in the Western Desert and Burma, finally in Java, where he was captured by the Japanese, to be held — sometimes under threat of imminent execution — for three years. Many of his subsequent books refer back to his experiences as a prisoner of war.

It was the turning point of his life. *The Seed and the Sower* (1963) eventually became the film *Merry Christmas*. *Mr Laurence*, *The Dark*

He led the listeners to his stories through Bushman or Homeric tales to ponder the wisdom of the soul

Eye in Africa (1965), a meditation which he had begun to write before the war, signalled his renewed interest in the problems of his own continent. Van der Post's writings, so often autobiographical, cover only some of the episodes in his long life. For instance, only in his 90th year did he write about his experiences in Indonesia after the war. In *The Admiral's Baby* (1996), an autobiographical sequel to *The Night of the New Moon* (1979), he describes the brief British involvement in Java, 1945-47, when he worked in a senior role for Lord Mountbatten during the difficult period when the Dutch prepared, mistakenly, to resume their colonial rule.

Eventually — long after the war had ended — he returned to Britain, collected an OBE and a CBE "for gallant and distinguished services in the field", quit the Army (where he was a full Colonel) set off again for Africa and for a new career as writer-explorer. In 1948, he married again to Ingrid Giffard, a Jungian analyst whom he had met on a journey before the war. She introduced him to Carl Gustav Jung in Zurich.

Van der Post's literary reputation took off with the publication of *Venture to the Interior* in 1952, his account of a journey to Nyassaland investigating for the British government to attract planters for its post-war reconstruction. The book continues to attract plaudits for its poetic sensibility and profound insights into Africa, even as it is criticised for its inflation of a simple central African journey. Van der Post never looked back. He produced colourful and (for those in sym-

pathy) magnificent novels set in an Africa frequently borrowed from his childhood, their themes tending to the adventurous for example, *The Face Beside The Fire* (1953), *Flamingo Feather* (1955), and later, when he had become famous for his expertise on the Bushmen of Bechuanaland/Botswana, *A Story Like The Wind* (1972) and *A For-Off Place* (1973).

In the 1950s he had made journeys to the Kalahari (*The Last World Of The Kalahari*, 1958), *The Heart of The Hunter*, 1961), with spin-off television documentaries. These were later to attract criticism from professional anthropologists, though laymen better remembered van der Post's love of these doomed people. He went on to travel in, and report from, Russia and Japan and even managed an engaging cookery book called *First Catch Your Eland* (1977).

But this was his role as a man of public affairs, which he conducted very privately. His contacts — his friendships — in southern Africa were considerable, as they were in London and elsewhere, and this brought him roles in the dramas of the past 30 years, many of which still retain unreported. For example, we now know that he was awarded his knighthood in 1981 because of his role as intermediary in the London-Johannesburg negotiations over a Rhodesian settlement not because his friend Margaret Thatcher appreciated his literary gifts.

HE OFTEN chose to conceal his continuing fight against apartheid in its darkest days, just as he was totally discreet about his role as sage and counsellor to the Royal Family: that he was godfather to Prince William was the only public clue. (Private Eye never really understood how important he was to Princes Charles, however they mocked the relationship in the wickedly funny serial, *Hair of Sorrows*.)

As the years passed — he had based himself in London and in a converted lighthouse in Alderbury — van der Post's books became increasingly autobiographical, reflective and mystical. In *Yet Being Someone Other* (1982) and *About Bloddy* (1981), the nearest he got to straightforward autobiography, van der Post was writing about long-lasting memories, recent friendships and urgent concerns. He became an influential and active leader of the world-wide "wilderness" concept and publisher of *Wilderness* magazine set up to support his pioneering work.

He followed events in South Africa intensely, and continued to be a frequent visitor, his sympathies — for Chief



Laurens van der Post, above left, with grand-daughter Emma Crichton-Miller in *The World About Us* on BBC TV in 1979; above, in London, in 1988. PHOTOGRAPHS: GRHAM TURNER

Getsba Buthelesi, for instance — were rarely in line with current fashion, just as his opposition to sanctions (and his likely influence in this on Margaret Thatcher) did not assure him the approval of many Guardian readers. None of this should suggest that he ever had the slightest sympathy for apartheid: on the contrary, he was from his youth, as his books confirm, a passionate and instinctive enemy of racism. But he was born a member of the Afrikaner Establishment and could never resign.

He was for ever a White African — he was honoured to be dubbed a "White Bushman" — yet he spent most of his life outside South Africa. In his later years, his energies undiminished by age, he continued to write and to nurse his wife Ingrid (to whom

many of his books were dedicated). He always found the time to respond, unwillingly, to the people, strangers as well as friends, who applied to him for support and wisdom. He was greatly loved by old and young: he had a natural courtesy which he offered, indiscriminately, to princes or waiters, statesmen or students.

His friendship with Jung had been very important in his life (and his biography of Jung was one of the books he was happiest to have written), though he never felt the need to undergo analysis. In old age he was increasingly drawn to the ultimate masters of literature — Homer, Shakespeare and Dante — and his writing shows his growing preoccupation with them. He had discovered and developed to a fine art a won-

derful African gift for public story-telling: the sessions when he could be persuaded to hold forth, with never a note, were invariably crowded, as he led his listeners through Bushman or Homeric tales to ponder the laws and the wisdom of the soul. He had become the wise old man of Africa — a Jungian — and also universal — archetype, and as such he, and his memory, will survive the occasional sceptic and his very few — detractors.

He is survived by his wife, Ingrid, a daughter, Lucia, and six grandchildren.

J D F Jones

Sir Bryan Roberts Guardian of the law and of honest accounts

IN THE early years after Malawi became independent in 1963, Prime Minister (later President) Dr Hastings Banda's tasks were difficult, but he was able to place the country on a surprisingly sound economic footing. This was due to the influence of Sir Bryan Roberts, his principal adviser, who has died aged 73.

Conditions deteriorated badly later as the government regime became increasingly oppressive, but in the early days, Banda was much in favour with international aid donors for the prudent manner in which external aid to Malawi was used and, equally important, accounted for. The extent to which Banda relied upon Sir Bryan's advice and skills — often subtly exercised — is illustrated by the fact that he entrusted to Roberts the chairmanship of the all-important Malawi army council, national security and intelligence council and development and planning council.

Bryan Roberts was born at Southsea, the son of the chief education officer for Croydon, and went to Oxford. He had a distinguished war record and did not return to civilian life until 1946. He was commissioned in the Artillery and in the last two years of the war served in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He then took up law and was called to the Bar, as a member of Gray's Inn, in 1950. He worked for a further two years in the civil service in the Treasury Solicitor's Department before taking up a career in the colonies where he spent the next 19 years — all in central Africa.

Roberts joined the colonial legal service in 1963 in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) where he served for seven years as Crown Counsel until being promoted to Director of Public Prosecutions in 1968. The following year he moved to become Solicitor-General in Nyasaland (now Malawi) which, with the two Rhodesias, had become part of the Central Africa Federation in 1963. Roberts's service in Africa covered the whole of the federal era and, in its later years, he was closely involved in the government's negotiations with the Nyasaland Congress Party, attempts, under Dr Banda, to extricate itself from the federation. These years were tumultuous, sometimes violent, and involved much, often difficult, legal work.

He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1961. He was min-

ister of justice from 1962 to 1963 and energetically, firmly and carefully guided — and at times restrained — his Malawian parliamentary secretary, who was to succeed him. His contribution to Malawi became even greater after independence when he concurrently held the posts of Attorney-General, secretary for justice, secretary to the Cabinet and head of the Civil Service. He worked closely with ministers and particularly with Dr Banda — first prime minister and then president — who had to deal with alarming events: the ministerial rebellion a few weeks after independence when the



Bryan Roberts... sharp and pragmatic intelligence

whole Cabinet either resigned or were dismissed; the armed forces of Chipembere and Chisiza in 1965 and 1967; AAI-isation of the Civil Service over an extended period; the resignation of all the high court judges in 1970, when they objected to changes in the criminal justice system; Banda's diplomatic and economic relations with South Africa.

In 1972 he left Malawi and returned to this country, where he was knighted. He worked in the Lord Chancellor's office from 1973 to 1982, as under-secretary for the last five years. In 1975 he was made a justice of the peace and in 1982, a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate; he was chairman of both the Rhodesian and Malawian 'Judges' Associations.

Bryan Roberts was a man of great elegance, sartorially and linguistically, a man of sharp and pragmatic intelligence and an entertaining conversationalist. He was married three times, and is survived by his wife Barbara.

Colin Baker
Bryan Clive Roberts, lawyer and civil servant, born March 22, 1923; died December 6, 1996

Birthdays

Simon Bates, disc jockey, 49; Peter Blackburn, chairman, Nestlé's UK, 58; Dame Mary Cartwright, FRS, mathematician, 96; Prof Mark Casselle, 58; Tommy Stowell, singer and actor, 60; William Stewart, former vice-chancellor, Keele University, 81; Baroness Strang, author, 86; Cecil Walker, Ulster Unionist MP, 72.

Death Notices

CLIFFTON John, passed away suddenly but peacefully at home in Bristol, Tuesday 12th November. Love you. Army, Army, Love and Service. Funeral service Friday, December 20th at Christ Church, Clifton, Bristol 10.30am. Flowers or donations by Anthony International, c/o R. Davies, 201 Grosvenor Road, Brighton BN1 1PS. **KAY** Jack Bernard, on December 15th, peacefully at Westwood General Hospital, Clifton, after a long illness. Burial on 20th December at 3.45. No flowers. Donations to British Lung Foundation, Engineering Co-operative Funeral Services, 202 St. Pauls.

In Memoriam

CLIFF, James Peter, ex Production Manager, Granada TV. Died in a North West hospital 10th November 1996. Married with great grace and loved by his wife and children. Funeral service to be held in St. Andrew's Church, Clifton, on Saturday, December 21st, 11.00am. Family and friends are invited to attend. Donations to British Lung Foundation, Engineering Co-operative Funeral Services, 202 St. Pauls.

Anniversaries

Dear Alice, let's by another historical impossibility... Part 7

Jackdaw



Mis-fortune

DIRECTORATE of Corporate Services
Deputy MIS Manager
Barking College has a large, well-resourced Further Education College that has achieved growth of 80 per cent in the three years since incorporation. As part of the college's underlying commitment to IT, you will play a crucial role in the on-going development and evolution of our MIS capacity. With an appropriate degree and/or professional qualification, your project management experience will be invaluable in helping deliver a flexible and wide-ranging vision for MIS.

Wise words

SHE does not: Get PMS. She becomes: Hormonally Homicidal. She does not have: A Killer Body. She is: Terminally Attractive. She is not: A Bad Cook. She is: Microwave Compatible. She is not: A Bad Driver. She is: Automatically Challenged. She is not: A Perfect 10. She is: Numerically Superior. She is not: Easy. She is: Fortzontally Accessible. She does not have: Sexy Lips. She is: Collegen Dependent. You do not ask her: To Dance. You request: A Pre-coital Rhythmic Experience. She is not: A Gossip. She is: A Verbal Terminator. She does not have: A Great Butt. She is: Gluteous To The Maximus. She does not have: Big Hoofers. She does not have: Great Cleavage (A Great Rack). Her breasts are: Centrally Located.

Wot-Rot

A WOMAN who has waited a fair old while for a call, or for the sound of key-fumbling in the hall, frets a bit. She completes a mental check list of the possibilities (she prefers mangled car-in-the-bathroom). And she decides both are probably fairly extreme, as scenarios go. She gives up fretting and allows her ire to rise. When a "What the Hell" guy gets home to a female with puffy eyes (waiting up/fretting/lying awake rehearsing cutting comments) and a stony countenance, he imagines the mood might improve if he just acts normal. He imagines wrong. The thing is, Sweetie-Pie is none too keen on the Pariah role, now he's getting a taste of it. He'd like to reinstate himself in the Good Books (in which he was formerly so comfortable) as swiftly as possible. He calls on all his inner resources. Roll on the Run-Around Brothers. The Run-Around Brothers, Tommy-Rot and Red-Herring are key members of a man's Cranium Family. He relies on them to get him out of all sorts of Scrapes With Women. They are a pesky pair. Fed up with hanging about in a man's psyche waiting for their cue to come out, when they hear the words "I didn't call because I thought you'd be asleep" they waste no time in rushing into action. At breakfast a stony-faced woman, who is making an art of ignoring the pathetic excuses limping over the cereal packets is sometimes a bit disconcerted when Sweetie-Pie That Was is transformed suddenly into a conniving double act. Her measured, mindless mused-chewing is momentarily disrupted when the man goes into Excuse-Affection Overdrive. For a second, she isn't exactly sure what is happening. This is what is happening. The Run-Around Brothers work as a team. Tommy-Rot

flaps some serious flannel at the woman, while Red-Herring distracts her with a bit of the old kissy-wissy. (The man imagines the combo to be pretty failsafe. He is enormously well-encouraged by the temporary halt in mused-chewing.) He imagines wrong. Still, the Run-Around boys jump to it. "So", says Tommy-Rot, "the reason I hadn't mentioned it was because I didn't want to upset you. And look, see, I was right because you are upset..." "Come on" pouts Red-Herring. "Let's just forget it, eh?" "Friends" whine the boys in unison as Red lowers his head and attempts to plant a smoocheroo on the woman's shoulder. But the smoocheroo fails. Miserably. The woman rises slowly from her seat and, with a calculated step, approaches the sink. She proceeds to rinse her mused bowl. Noisily. Eventually the dish clatters on to the draining board. The tap is turned off. The woman swings around to face the man. She does not look like his Honey-Bunny.

Liberty lies

YES, I seem to have contracted some attention-deficit disorder and, hey, how about them Skins, huh? See, I won't be able to, yes, could I help you? No, no, I'll be sticking with Sprint, but thank you for calling.

Cosmopolitan describes some common Man-in-the-Dog House tactics.

When I got up this morning I took two Ec-Lax in addition to my Prozac. I can't get off the john, but I feel good about it.
"My stigmata's acting up."
"I can't come in to work today because I'll be stalking my previous boss, who fired me for not showing up for work. OK?"
"I have a rare case of 48-hour projectile leprosy, but I know we have that deadline to meet..."
"I am stuck in the blood pressure machine down at the Food Giant."
"Constipation has made me a walking time-bomb."
"I just found out that I was switched at birth. Legally, I shouldn't come to work knowing my employee records may now contain false information."
"The psychiatrist said it was an excellent session. He even gave me this jaw restraint so I won't bite things when I am startled."
"The dog ate my car keys. We're going to hitch-hike to the vet."
"I prefer to remain an enigma."

My mother-in-law has come back as one of the Undead and we must track her to her coffin to drive a stake through her heart and give her eternal peace. One day should do it.

"I can't come to work today because the EPA has determined that my house is completely surrounded by wetlands and I have to arrange for helicopter transportation."
"I am converting my calendar from Julian to Gregorian."
"I am extremely sensitive to a rise in the interest rates."
"I refuse to travel to my job in the District until there is a commuter tax. I insist on paying my fair share."
The Washington Post provides excuses for those wishing to avoid the office all of next week. Thanks to Bob Paisley.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk; fax 0171-713 4966; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

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Finance Guardian

Sellafield storm over plan to increase discharges

Paul Brown and Simon Beavis report on the latest, costly delay to beset the £2.3bn Thorp nuclear reprocessing plant

BRITISH Nuclear Fuels' showcase £2.3 billion Thorp reprocessing plant, at Sellafield in west Cumbria, will be hit by fresh costly delays because of a row over its plans for a huge increase in discharges from the plant.

The thermal oxide reprocessing plant has still to be formally "commissioned" by government safety officials, nearly three years after it began operations. An application to go through the commissioning process with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) was expected many months ago but has still not been made by the operators BNFL.

But the company has applied to change the radioactive discharges from the plant and faces substantial legal hurdles in justifying them to the Environment Agency and the public.

An application to increase six-fold the aerial discharges of the isotope tritium has been placed on the public register. It is bound to cause a flood of new objections when the application for a new discharge licence is put out for public consultation next year.

Martin Forwood, for Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment and a veteran BNFL watcher, believes the company is "deliberately hiding serious weaknesses."

"Thorp is clearly in trouble. We have always believed the plant was unnecessary and a white elephant. BNFL was always far too optimistic about its future."

"The company is very secretive about exactly what is going on in terms of production. The application for new aerial emissions shows something is amiss. The company would not be asking for them unless they had been forced to by circumstances — closing this stuff over the countryside brings the threat of more cancers."

Mr Forwood added that "by their own original targets

they should have reprocessed 1,000 tonnes of fuel by now but their latest figures show they have actually managed just 400 tonnes. The original 10-year timescale for reprocessing 7,000 tonnes in 10 years seems dubious, if not impossible."

BNFL has urged the Environment Agency to deal with the new discharge licences as quickly as possible but, with the prospect of having its actions challenged in the High Court by green groups, the agency will be cautious.

Even if all goes well, it will be at least the middle of 1997 before a new licence can be issued. The agency estimates it would take another six weeks before it evaluates the application for new discharges and public consultation could begin.

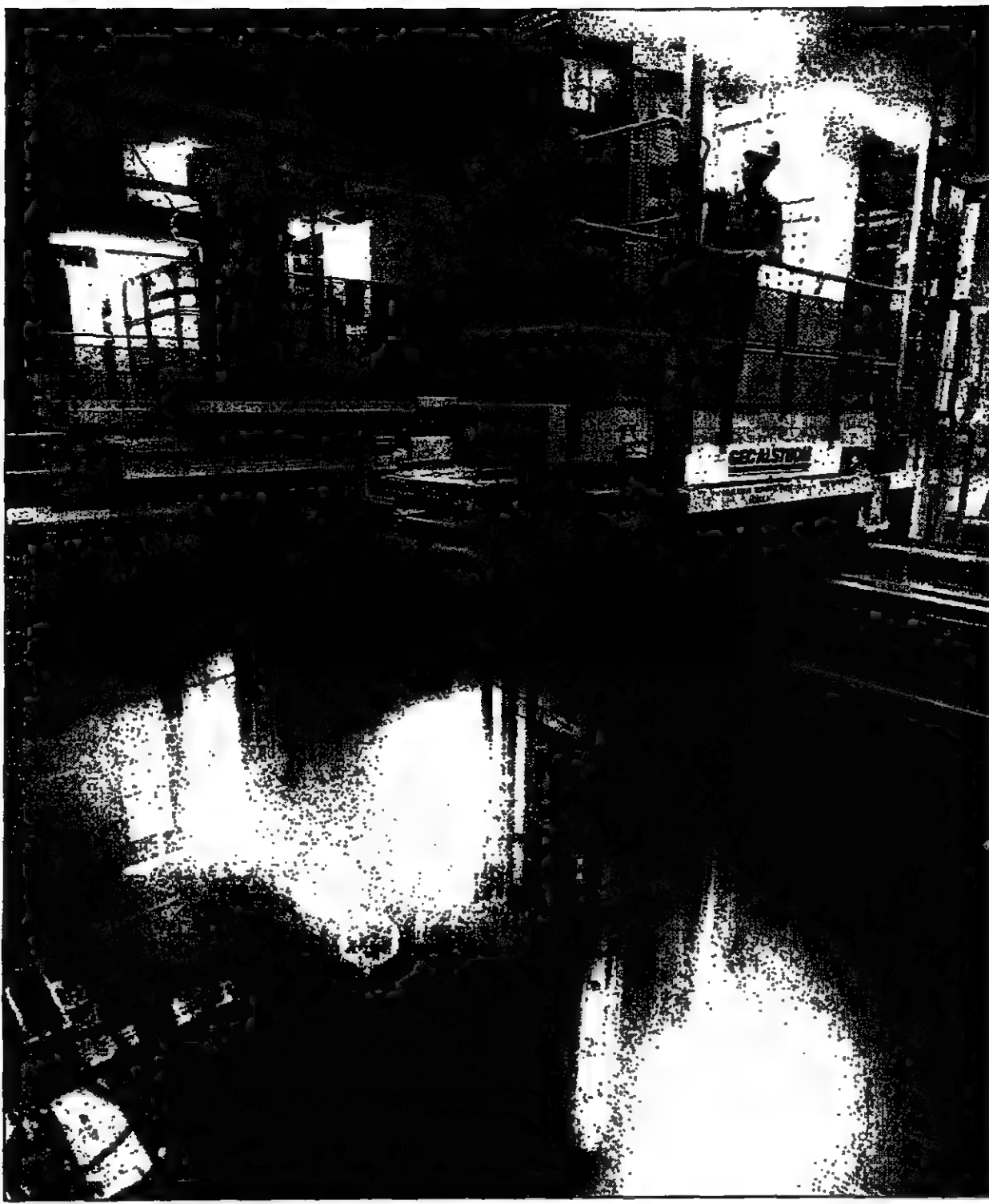
This has to last eight weeks, according to statute, and then any comments must be considered in detail. No result is likely before the end of June.

Despite these apparent setbacks, the company remains optimistic that Thorp will work as originally intended, that its new application will be granted and that the works will still manage to reprocess 7,000 tonnes of spent nuclear fuel for British, German, Japanese and Swiss nuclear utilities in the first 10 years.

The forecast of £500 million profit for Thorp in this period still holds good, the company says.

Alastair Thomas, development manager for the Thorp group, said that if the application on emissions was delayed the company could be in trouble.

BNFL says that the increase in aerial emissions is balanced by a reduction in sea discharges of tritium. In the first two financial years, the company says 65 tonnes and 205 tonnes of fuel respectively were chopped up ("abused") and dissolved. Its target for the present year is to reach more than 400 tonnes and it expects to hit a throughput of 900 tonnes in the fifth year, 1998/99.



Nuclear puzzle... The Thorp plant, at Sellafield in Cumbria, has still to be formally commissioned. PHOTOS: AP/WIDE WORLD

Notebook

Economic victors can still lose out



Edited by Mark Milner

ONE glance at the OECD's glowing report on the state of the British economy shows why some ministers are privately fuming at the antics of the Conservative Euro-sceptics.

A month ago, just before the Budget, the Government finally thought the message was starting to sink in. The economy was looking good, some of the gloss was coming off Tony Blair and, miracle of miracles, the opinion poll gap was closing.

Now they are back to square one. As one minister put it privately yesterday: "These people are mad to think you can win an election by being anti-European. But you can certainly lose one by being divided."

The frustration is easy to understand. The OECD expects UK growth to be a chunky 3.3 per cent in 1997, slowing only marginally to 3 per cent in 1998. Unemployment, set to dip below two million this month or next, is forecast to be around 1.75 million in two years time. Inflation is dormant and is expected to remain so.

This is an impressive performance by the standards of any country. For the UK, as the OECD notes, it is an achievement not matched since the mid-sixties.

What's more, as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, points out in its monthly report today, negative equity will be a thing of the past as this year's recovery in house prices spills over into 1997. Ministers wonder what else they could do to revive the Government's popularity. The answer, almost certainly, is nothing.

Perhaps voters may have decided that the Conservatives deserve no credit for the devaluation-induced economic revival. Just as likely, however, is that they have decided that the Conservatives have simply been in power for too long.

A whiff of sleaze has more public effect than 30,000 net unemployment.

Why? Because, this time round at least, it's not the economy, stupid.

pounds, marks, dollars, any currency it could get its hands on, in a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to keep sterling within the exchange rate mechanism.

The deputy governor's timing, however, was interesting. The ink is barely dry on the stability pact which caused so much heart searching in Dublin at the end of last week and which is already coming under fire in Germany.

It is a moot point whether the penalties embodied in the stability pact would ever be invoked. Politically they would be dynamite. But, putting that rather large caveat aside for a moment, what Mr Davies has done is to provide a reminder that the convergence criteria are not a sort of monetary highway code, with fixed rate penalties for exceeding the budgetary speed limits. Economies are not motor vehicles. Their drivers cannot be hauled on to the hard shoulder or into the magistrates' court for a wigging or a fine.

Such reminders are necessary. If monetary union was to take place and then subsequently fall the consequences for the European Union would be devastating. Nonetheless, Britain's position in Europe might take such warnings more to heart if Britain were seen to be closer to the heart of Europe. The fact that it is not was illustrated neatly by Mr Davies' accompanying homily over access to Target, the European settlement system.

Active investors

WHEN it comes to the UK Active Value Fund, activity is rather more apparent than value.

Certainly Kenwood Appliances' management will think so. UKAV had called for Kenwood to put itself up for sale and, though the management has seen the idea off, the battle has left the company with costs of £500,000-plus. Greycoat, another recipient of UKAV's less than welcome interest, faces a similar bill.

UKAV's forays into Greycoat and Kenwood raise a point. One of the arguments in favour of the quoted company system is that the market imposes its own discipline on management. Outperformers may reap big rewards but underperforming managers know they may face shareholders with their own ideas about how their companies should be run.

Corporate democracy comes at a price. Shareholders have to be circulated, meetings held, professional advisers hired. Management time is gobbled up in fighting battles within the Square Mile rather than in running their companies' operations. Should some sort of check be imposed? The answer is No. The market should be allowed to function freely.

If the likes of UKAV (which is not modest as far as its management fees are concerned) fail to deliver value as well as action they will find themselves subject to discipline. Those who live by the sword...

Bass to sell 61 Holiday Inns



Domestic Wakes

BASS, the brewing and leisure group, is to offload 61 of its Holiday Inn hotels in the US and Canada in a deal worth about \$650 million (£390 million).

Under the terms of the deal announced yesterday, Bass is selling its interests in 47 hotels and 14 management contracts to the Dallas-based Bristol Hotel Company. In return it will receive \$381 million, plus a 36.1 per cent stake in Bristol, said the company spokesman.

Bass, which admitted last

week that it was in talks with Bristol, said the deal would have no significant effect on earnings. As part of the agreement, it will get two seats on the Bristol board.

After the deal goes through next spring, Bristol will continue to operate the hotels under the Bass-owned Holiday Inn franchise and intends to convert a further 10 of its 39 existing hotels to the brand.

The 61 hotels, which have a book value of \$638 million, generated profits of \$69 million in the year to October.

Richard North, Bass's finance director, said the disposal formed part of the

group's plan to build the mid-market Holiday Inn brand as a global franchise business.

"Owning and managing hotels is simply a means of supporting that operation. We have reached the point in the US where that is no longer necessary," he said.

Holiday Inn would continue to own and manage its up-market Crowne Plaza hotels in North America, he added.

Recently, there have been suggestions that Bass was seeking to sell some of its European Holiday Inns, including those in the UK. However, a spokesman said yesterday: "Outside the US, franchising is not a mature

market. We would expect to continue to invest in assets in Europe given the right opportunities."

In the UK and Ireland there are 36 Holiday Inns, of which 10 are owned outright by Bass, two are joint ventures and one is leased. Bass manages another two properties and the rest are owned by franchisees.

Bass, which must face a Monopolies Commission investigation in connection with its takeover of Carlsberg-Tetley, also announced yesterday that it is to spend \$14.8 million installing new Unisys computers at 2,800 pubs and restaurants in the UK.

Scargill calls one-day strikes

Seamus Milne
Labour Editor

ASERIES of one-day walkouts has been called by the National Union of Mineworkers throughout the privatised coal industry after a 54 per cent vote to strike over pay and union recognition.

Arthur Scargill, NUM president, said the first strike would take place on Jan 6, with further stoppages every Monday. A spokesman for RJB Mining — which owns the bulk of the surviving deep mine collieries — said legal action to halt the strikes "could not be ruled out".

The NUM balloted just over 6,000 of its members employed in more than 20 mining companies, including RJB, its subsidiaries, other coal companies and contractors such as Trafalgar House and Cementation. Turnout in the postal ballot was 47 per cent, with 1,435 voting in favour of strikes and 1,221 against.

Mr Scargill said the ballot was held as a result of "rank and file pressure" since a poll in February, which only produced a 35 per cent strike vote. Discontent over basic pay rates has built up as bonuses and overtime have been squeezed. RJB refuses to recognise unions for collective bargaining and its latest pay and regrading offer includes no increase for some miners.

RJB, which has proved highly profitable and has already paid off its privatisation debts, has seen its share price fall sharply as the impact of the high pond has slashed import prices.

Media moguls under pressure

Cable firms angered by OFT ruling on Murdoch

Andrew Cuff
Media Correspondent

THE cable industry is considering an appeal to Europe over a ruling by the Office of Fair Trading which it says unfairly favours Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB.

The OFT decision to approve a revised rate card for the supply of BSkyB channels to cable operators.

John Bridgeman, the director general of fair trading, said the "changes increase the flexibility of cable operators in marketing their services".

ruling. It said it disagreed with the conclusion that there were no adverse effects from the rate card.

"We fail to see how today's announcement is in the consumer's interest," the association said. "The new rate card will require the majority, if not all, cable television subscribers to pay for BSkyB services regardless of whether they want them or not."

The association has waged a long-standing campaign against BSkyB, which it says is the only company to dictate the terms and conditions on which cable operators carry its programming.

It said the issue was not closed and there was speculation it would appeal to the European Commission or seek a High Court judicial review.

Calls for a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission were thought unlikely, because the Government would be reluctant to

upset Mr Murdoch with a referral in the run-up to the General Election.

BSkyB's revised rate card gives cable operators the option to choose discount structures. These could be based either on the ratio of the number of premium channels taken to the number of potential cable households, or the ratio of the number of premium channels to basic channels taken.

It means cable companies will have the option to carry a basic BSkyB channel to fewer than 100 per cent of subscribers.

Shares in BSkyB were buoyed by the news together with reports that it will announce this week a launch date for up to 200 digital satellite television channels.

Louise Barton, analyst at Henderson Crosswright, said: "There is relief that BSkyB has not tempered that much with the pricing structure."

Black retreats from Australia

Lisa Buckingham

CONRAD Black, the Canadian tycoon who owns the Daily Telegraph, yesterday retreated from the Australian market by selling his 25 per cent stake in John Fairfax, publisher of the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age in Melbourne and the Australian Financial Review.

Mr Black's Hollinger group has sold out to Brerley Investments for \$54 million (Australian dollars £27.4 million) after finally accepting that the Australian government will not quickly relax its rules limiting foreign media ownership.

Dan Colson, chief executive of the Telegraph and a director of Hollinger, said the company had made an £820 million profit on its five-year investment and could use the proceeds to fund acquisitions.

The 165-year-old Fairfax group collapsed into receivership in 1990 with debts of about \$4.2 billion after a member of the founding family failed to take it private.

Mr Black engineered a deal to re-float the group, leaving 15 per cent of its stock in the hands of the Telegraph. That was subsequently raised to 25 per cent — the calling put on the overseas ownership of Australian media properties.

Since then, the Fairfax share register has been host to other rival media magnates such as Rupert Murdoch, who recently disposed of his holding even though he likened Fairfax's classified advertising to "rivers of gold".

Kerry Packer, Australia's richest individual, also owns a 15 per cent stake and is widely expected to try to seize control if the government relaxes its cross-media ownership rules, possibly as soon as this spring.

Top insurance brokers merge

Tommy King

TWO OF Britain's leading insurance brokers, Lloyd Thompson Group and JIB Group, are to merge in a £200 million deal which has been prompted by the "increasingly competitive market environment".

Ken Carter, chief executive of Lloyd Thompson, who will run the enlarged company, said the main attraction of the deal was the complementary nature of the two companies' operations. It forges London's third largest brokerage firm behind Sedgwick and Willis Coroon. Known as Jardine Lloyd Thompson, the merged brokerage will have income of about £230 million.

Low insurance premiums

are prompting broking firms to merge so that costs can be cut and profits boosted.

On the merger becoming effective in February, Lloyd Thompson shareholders will hold 49 per cent of the share capital and JIB shareholders 51 per cent.

Jardine Matheson, the Hong Kong conglomerate which will hold 34 per cent of the enlarged company through JIB, said: "The combined business will be more competitive than either company on its own and better placed to serve the increasingly sophisticated requirements of their clients."

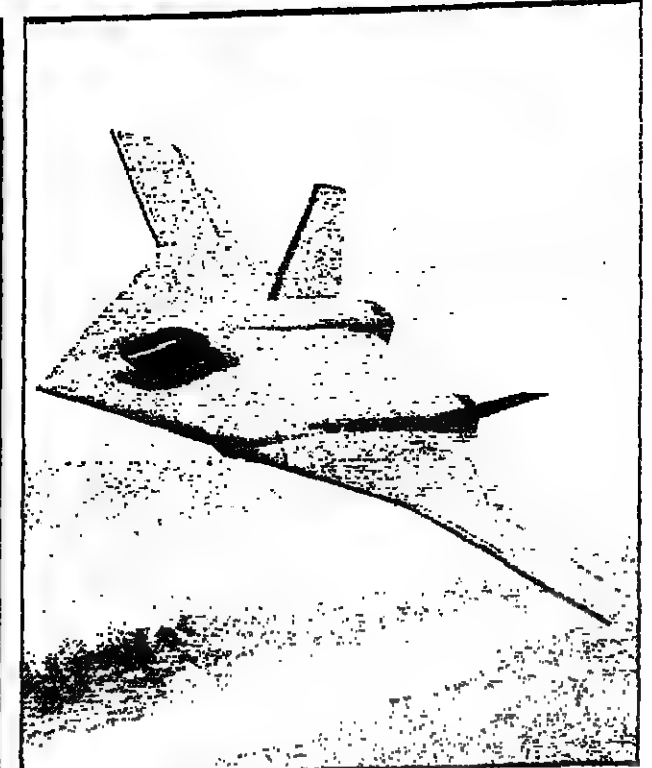
Mr Carter said the deal had not been prompted by last week's \$1.5 billion (£740 million) takeover of Alexander & Alexander Services by Aon Corp.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.03	France 6.44	Italy 2.401	Singapore 2.27
Austria 17.84	Germany 2.50	Malta 0.5850	South Africa 7.85
Belgium 51.85	Greece 398.00	Netherlands 2.51	Spain 210.87
Canada 2.21	Hong Kong 12.54	New Zealand 2.30	Sweden 11.19
Cyprus 0.7540	India 84.81	Norway 10.52	Switzerland 2.13
Denmark 9.84	Ireland 0.97	Portugal 253.57	Turkey 187.257
Finland 7.89	Israel 5.44	Saudi Arabia 6.19	USA 1.8255

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).

THE BOEING MERGER: Battle for the skies



The first Boeing 737-700 leaving the assembly hangar in Seattle and an artist's impression of a 'stealthy' option to replace RAF Tornados

Accidents force world's airlines to improve crisis management

THE WORLD'S airlines are urgently overhauling their crisis management techniques in response to growing public disquiet over safety following recent accidents, writes Keith Harper. An investigation by the International Air Transport Association representing more than 250 airlines, including British Airways, has revealed that many have poor communications and are ill-equipped to deal with a crisis. The main defaulter is one of the larger US carriers, among them TWA, whose communications were described last night by an IATA official as "very poor" after the flight 800 disaster in July which killed 230 people. IATA said some senior managers had been insufficiently briefed on the facts before they were released to the public. It said many companies had cut their communications departments and were only exposed when a disaster occurred. Senior managers from the two main Japanese carriers JAL and ANA were told by IATA in Tokyo that the association is drawing up a code of practice which will be issued to the airlines early next year. It will contain instructions telling companies how to act. "They must be ready to tell relatives who have lost loved ones and the public

Europe whistles in the wind

Keith Harper Transport Editor

CALLS for a swifter merger of the four partners which form Airbus enveloped the consortium yesterday as it began to digest the implications of the \$26 billion merger of Boeing and McDonnell Douglas. They came from politicians and from within the company, which 24 hours earlier had been predicting business as usual. This complacent attitude was later replaced by a suggestion from Airbus chairman Edouard Reuter that the timetable for achieving single

company status had to be achieved before 1999. He admitted the American market would "force us to consider moving quicker". It was a warning to "all Europeans to speed up the integration of their aerospace industry, not only in commercial aircraft but in defence". This view was underlined by the German economics minister, Günter Rexrodt, who said that Airbus had to move quickly to improve its structure to compete with its American rivals. It needed to be a "convincing, integrated European company, with control of its products and costs". Mr Rexrodt said Europe had to counter the American

challenge with technology, an area where Europe was still lagging behind the US. The French gave Airbus a high profile yesterday by announcing a forthcoming visit by the world's richest man, the Sultan of Brunei. Royal Brunei Airlines' fleet is at present predominantly Boeing 747s. Airbus's greatest problem is how to resolve differences between its four national partners as it moves towards single company status. The partners said in July that they would reach a timetable for setting up a new company in 1999 by the end of the year, but this has slipped to the beginning of next year.

The partners are Aérospatiale and Germany's Deutsche Aerospace, each with 37.5 per cent share, British Aerospace with 20 per cent and Cass of Spain with 4.3 per cent. A senior executive said yesterday that the partners had different positions, Aérospatiale wanting a minimal Airbus, the Germans wanting maximum involvement, with BAE seeking a transfer of core assets from the partners to the new company. Dick Evans, its chief executive, envisaged BAE's dissolution into European Aerospace. These divergent aims pit the French against the Germans and the British. The Germans want to deepen Air-

bus's integration to include design and engineering of sub-assemblies and building fuselage and nacelles. BAE would like to transfer design and manufacturing facilities and provide Airbus with a strong balance sheet to finance aircraft sales. Such a move would damage Aérospatiale's reputation. Drawing together the disparate threads of four countries into one business entity has never been attempted. Senior executives are trying to work out how the shareholdings in the new company will be represented. Aérospatiale gains some 70 per cent of annual sales from the civilian sector, more than

BAE and the Germans, which have military and motor vehicle sales to boost their revenue income. Although Aérospatiale would receive Airbus dividends, it would lose key operations, and be left with missiles and satellites. Wall Street reacted enthusiastically to the Boeing/McDonnell Douglas merger as investors saw the emergence of an aerospace powerhouse, writes Mark Tran in New York. McDonnell shares climbed \$12 to \$64 in late morning trading while Boeing rose 85¢ to \$102.40. Boeing's shares were the most actively traded on the New York stock exchange, with McDonnell's second most active.

'Uninhabited' aircraft could replace Tornado

David Fairhall Defence Correspondent

THE Ministry of Defence is committing £36 million to the study of possible replacements for the RAF's Tornado bomber, ranging from a relatively straightforward long-range derivative

of the controversial Eurofighter to an ambitious new pilotless design. About £8 million (including £1.5 million from British Aerospace) will be spent on Anglo-French computer modelling, but there is as yet no commitment from Britain's partners in the Tornado project, Germany and Italy. The RAF reckons its Tornado GR4s will need replacing by 2015. The Luftwaffe's force of Tornado GR1s will have a similar life, but the Germans are still struggling to find funding for initial Eurofighter production. The RAF's approach is conditioned by the Gulf war, when its low-level Tornados

proved vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire and heavily dependent on in-flight refuelling. The replacement options to be studied include "stealthy" designs resembling the US Air Force F-117A, and some sort of unmanned (or "uninhabited" as a politically correct US engineers now have to say) aircraft. Among the most

exotic concepts is an aircraft flown from inside a windowless "virtual reality" cockpit. The next stage is to leave the pilot behind, in a cockpit on the ground. Yet another idea being explored is to install the complex navigational and aiming equipment in a cruise missile — an extension of weapons already under de-

velopment for the RAF — and drop this weapons package out of a simple transport aircraft. Study contracts managed by the Ministry of Defence procurement executive at Bristol will be given to a number of industrial contractors and with the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency.

velopment for the RAF — and drop this weapons package out of a simple transport aircraft. Study contracts managed by the Ministry of Defence procurement executive at Bristol will be given to a number of industrial contractors and with the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency.

Advertisement for Cellphones Direct featuring an Ericsson GA318 mobile phone. Text includes: 'Get more for your money with Cellphones Direct.', 'IT'S A GIFT £9.99 inc. VAT', 'FREE 2 MONTHS LINE RENTAL WORTH £35.26 INC. VAT', 'FREE CALLS - 30 MINS PER MONTH FOR 3 MONTHS', 'FREE LEATHER CARRY CASE AND IN-CAR ADAPTOR WORTH £55', 'FREE COUNTDOWN MEMBERSHIP FOR 1 YEAR', 'FREE £50 CHRISTMAS BONUS VOUCHER', 'FREE LIFETIME PRODUCT WARRANTY', 'FREE 14-DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE', 'FREE DELIVERY IN 4 WORKING DAYS', 'PRICE PLEDGE', 'VODAFONE PERSONAL WORLD TRIPER', 'FREEPHONE 0800 000 888 Cellphones Direct'.

MFI converts hard times into great expectations

OUTLOOK/Sales lift furnishings firm, writes Roger Cowe

KITCHENS and bedrooms are a pretty specialised retail niche, but if MFI's experience is anything to go by — and the store chain has plenty of experience of hard times — it is in danger of over-diversification. The doubt that people are spending more freely than at any time in the 1990s. Some recent retail statistics have cast doubt on that view, but MFI reported yesterday that sales in its UK stores had grown by 12 per cent in the six months to November. That is what might be expected in a housing boom but, according to chief executive John Randall, most of the UK has so far seen no such thing. "We think the housing market is still dormant," he said, suggesting that commentators who think otherwise are falling to look beyond the buoyant South-east. Mr Randall and his chairman, Derek Hunt, naturally claim their sales growth is due partly to superior products and brilliant management. But they also reckon the market for their products has grown by 6 per cent, which they attribute to growing consumer confidence. The duo's judgement deserves respect, since they have led MFI from a debt-laden management buy-out in November 1987, just as the last consumer boom was beginning to run out of steam, through survival to flotation and now growth. Survival seemed improbable as interest rates rose while spending shrank, but Yorkshire grit plus a stable and experienced management team — and steel-nerved bankers — did the trick. Stock-market flotation solved the debt problem, but

MFI financial data table. Columns: Metric, Value. Rows: Stock market value (£1.1bn), Share price (294 p), Workforce (9,000), Pre-tax profit (£3.6m), Dividends (2.5p), Half year performance (Operating profit £2m), Sales (£44.5m), Pre-tax profit (£3.6m), Dividends (2.5p), Half year performance (Operating profit £2m).

could not do anything about customers refusing to move house — the main motivation for shopping at MFI. So it has been a long, hard slog through the 1990s — especially when wood prices shot up last year, explaining the sharp dip in profits. MFI has not been standing still waiting for shoppers to unleash their credit cards. If anything it is in danger of over-diversification. The handful of French stores acquired with Hygens has been expanded rapidly, to almost 100. France is now spilling over into Spain, with the first experimental shops opened there in the past six months. In the UK a separate builders supply business has been set up, called Howden Joinery, which currently has 24 outlets. This will double in the next 18 months. But the transformation of MFI's stores has been the main development. Under the 'homework' label, they have been redesigned to be more flexible, while smaller household products such as kitchenware have been introduced. Introducing this format has been slow, but is now being rolled out rapidly. More importantly, perhaps, the new approach liberates space, which will be hived off and rented out, expanding the group's role as a landlord through its limited development of retail parks. This has helped keep sales moving ahead even without higher consumer spending, and should make the spring pretty busy. MFI normally rakes in 30 per cent of its year's takings in the 10 weeks after New Year. Which should mean that 1997 will be unbearably busy if people decide they can afford to spend. Memories of the last boom might give pause for thought to those who recall Sir Phil Harris's problems when he moved away from carpets, and the nightmare of property development for Burton and others. But Messrs Hunt, Randall and colleagues have proved themselves canny enough so often that the bets are on their keeping the show on the road, almost regardless of how free spending consumers are.



MFI chief executive John Randall, who is diversifying the business and moving into Europe

Handwritten Arabic text: 'صكرا من الامل'

صوتك من الامل

Skiing

La Bomba back to ignite World Cup

Peter Nichols on the return of the charismatic Alberto Tomba

ALBERTO TOMBA, two days short of his 30th birthday, will today make his season's debut at Madonna di Campiglio in Italy. It is the third World Cup slalom event of the current campaign but the first in which the Italian, injured at his Passo del Tonale training camp in a fall on October 28, will ski.

"It's been a long time to wait," he said yesterday. "I don't know how long I will carry on but I want to prove that at 30 I can still be as good as at 20."

He is not the strong, silent type. As iron filings find a magnet, so Tomba will land in the spotlight. Only once, in a career that already spans 13 seasons, has the poor little rich boy been overshadowed. That was in the Lillehammer Olympics two years ago when Tonya Harding had a skating showdown with Nancy Kerrigan. Even Tomba could not upstage her.

By then the Italian had had two Olympics to himself. Drafted into the national squad at only 16 — the suggestion was that his father, a millionaire textile importer, was indulgent — he was guided towards his first Olympic tilt by Italy's most successful World Cup skier, Gustavo Thoeni. In Calgary, with his style modified by Thoeni's coaching but his confidence apparently needing no such tutoring, Tomba won both the slalom and the giant slalom, suggesting mid-competition that he would relay the news of the difficult patches back to his opponents to help them out; that went down well.

Four years later in Albertville he again won the giant slalom, the first Alpine skier in Olympic history to retain a title, but in the discipline he lost, the slalom, he established a trademark. He was so far adrift after the first run that he was discounted from medal calculations, yet his second descent of the Les Menuires slope was bewilder-

ingly fast and took him to an eight million lire fine (£3,000). This year he left the medalist, Norway's Finn Christian Jagge. Two years later in Lillehammer he effected the same trick: his second run was easily the day's fastest and 1.79sec quicker than Austria's Thomas Stangassinger, yet a fourth gold eluded him; his first run had left him a pedestrian 12th and the Austrian triumphed.

In 1996 Tomba won the overall World Cup title by 375 points despite competing in only two of the four disciplines — "La Bomba" will not ski the super-giant slalom or downhill — and last February he completed the nap hand when he won, at long last, the world titles, two as it happened. At those world championships, at Sierra Nevada, he could not resist incurring the wrath of the Spanish by describing their mountains as "like Morocco".

It was par for the course. Until last year Tomba had a day job as a sergeant in the carabinieri. But his most famous operation during his spell with the paramilitary was to use his blue lamp to avoid a traffic jam in Campostella, an

infraction which cost him an eight million lire fine (£3,000). This year he left the medalist, Norway's Finn Christian Jagge. Two years later in Lillehammer he effected the same trick: his second run was easily the day's fastest and 1.79sec quicker than Austria's Thomas Stangassinger, yet a fourth gold eluded him; his first run had left him a pedestrian 12th and the Austrian triumphed.

The incident stirred the paternal instincts of father Franco, who rallied to his son's cause. "He never has a moment's peace. He is besieged, hunted without truce," Tomba claimed he had only been throwing the trophy "to his sister", and Italy's ultimate sporting hero talked about not wanting to go on.

Yet he does, patched up for the Madonna race — though still not fit enough to race the giant slalom next week at Alta Badia — and committing himself to the world championships in Sestriere in February, the venue at which he won his first World Cup event. He is talking of staying on until the Winter Games at Nagano in 14 months' time. Even then he may not be able to walk away; this year he signed a three-year contract with Vail, the Colorado resort that hosts the 1999 world championships.

By 1999 he will be 32, but Marc Girardelli has shown that age need be no obstacle to success. Of trophies, though, Tomba has little more need; three Olympic golds, two world championship wins, 40 World Cup victories, eight alpine world slalom World Cup titles and one overall World Cup crown should be enough. But what he is most likely to fret about is that one day nobody will bother to take naked pictures of him. That may be almost too much to bear.



King of the mountains... Alberto Tomba is back on the slopes today after an injury at a training camp in October

Racing

Father's win a family affair for the Bowens

Chris Hawkins

THERE were shades of Sirrell Griffiths and Norton's Coin at Warwick yesterday when Peter Bowen saddled Name Of Our Father to win the Hampton Novices Hurdle at Tote odds of 106-1.

Bowen, whose nearest racecourse is a three-hour trip to Chesham, had only £2 on his winner, but as he said: "At these odds you don't need to bet big."

If anyone thinks Bowen is a country bumpkin fiddling around with a few old plodders they would be wrong. True, he has only 15 horses in his Haverfordwest yard on the Pembrokehire coast, but he is an energetic 38-year-old who has now sent out 17 winners this season after having over 100 point-to-point winners in three years before taking out a full licence 14 months ago.

Bowen, who plaited Name Of Our Father, drove the horsebox on the four-hour journey and led him round in the parade ring, runs his stable as a family concern and does not have any employees.

"Karen, my wife, does all the schooling and extra help comes in the shape of my brother and father," said Bowen. "I wasn't surprised this one won. He'd schooled well and was very fit."

Xavier Aizpuru, of Spanish parents but Gloucestershire origins, rode the second winner of his career when partnering Severn Gale in the Gog Brook Handicap.

Aizpuru rode a well judged race on the mare who looked sure to be overwhelmed when Pridewell Pricker moved up two out, but Severn Gale found firm reserves.

John Allen, the winning trainer, bought Severn Gale as a 25th wedding anniversary present for his wife Carol, who at the time was disappointed she did not get a diamond ring.

"After two wins in two weeks she can afford to buy one now," said Allen.

Lets Be Frank, forcefully ridden by Richard Johnson, registered a hat-trick in the Temple Grafton Hurdle and Noel Chance now intends to send him for a Gold Card Hurdle qualifier at Wincanton on Boxing Day.

However, Chance's main thoughts over Christmas will be with Mr Mulligan who, despite a disappointing reappearance at Chesham recently, runs in the King George VI Chase.

"We found that he'd twisted his back during the race at Chesham," said Chance. "He's been treated and straightened out now and Richard (Johnson) will be coming down tomorrow to give him a pop over some fences."

"The lad gets on with him and will ride at Kempton where we'll probably try and make his running. Confidence is the big thing with Mr Mulligan — if he pins the first two I'm sure he'll run a great race."

Konknecta Queen was just about the easiest winner of the afternoon in the Panacur Mares Only Hurdle. The opposition may not have amounted to much, but Oliver Sherwood thinks something of her and she should not be troubled to score again.

Maylin Magic ran a promising race to finish third and pleased Terry Casey, her trainer, who takes Rough Quest to Folkestone this afternoon for a run over hurdles.

The Grand National winner has only run once over the afternoon in the Panacur Mares Only Hurdle. The opposition may not have amounted to much, but Oliver Sherwood thinks something of her and she should not be troubled to score again.

"He'll need the outing, but he's doing his best," said Casey. "He's not as busy as he was first time out last year, but I'm sure he'll have a good follow-up."

In such circumstances Royal Achievement (2.30) may have a fitness edge here, while Conquering Leader (2.00) has impressed in home schools and is napped to make a winning debut over fences.

Folkstone runners and riders with form guide

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Runners. Includes races like 1.30 Weymouth Way, 2.00 Conquering Leader, 1.30 Weymouth Way, 2.00 Conquering Leader, 1.30 Weymouth Way, 2.00 Conquering Leader.

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Runners. Includes races like 1.00 Westfield Handicap, 1.30 Weymouth Way, 2.00 Conquering Leader, 1.30 Weymouth Way, 2.00 Conquering Leader.

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Advertisement for RACELINE featuring a 'Five of the best' section with names like CORAL, MUSELL, and FOLKESTONE.

Musselburgh

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Runners. Includes races like 1.20 Musselburgh, 1.50 Musselburgh, 1.20 Musselburgh, 1.50 Musselburgh.

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Blinked twice for the first time: FOLKESTONE 1.00 Credon.

Results

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Results. Includes results for Newcastle, Musselburgh, and Southwell.

WARWICK

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Results. Includes results for Warwick races.

Soccer

Premiership: Derby County 0, Everton 1

Barmby leaves Derby in the cold

David Lacey

DERBY County dominated Everton at the Baseball Ground for most of last night but struggled to ram home the advantage promised by a series of quick and confident attacking movements and ultimately paid the price. Clear chances were rare at either end, Asanovic missing one of the best for Derby early in the second half, with Ward heading over the bar later when he also might have scored. Then with four minutes remaining Nick Barmby stole a victory for Everton, heading in the rebound from close range after Parkinson's 25-yard shot had hit the bar. Derby, like Leicester and Sunderland, the other promoted teams, are making a decent start in the Premier League this season and Jim Smith's side started last night unbeaten in five matches. Smith's players have been passing the ball well, defending competently and since appeared to be on the point of scoring more regularly. In Asanovic, moreover, Derby appear to have made one of the better Balkan buys. Everton, too, were enjoying a run of success in the league while, continued to worry about the relegation battle, although that had come in their last home fixture, Sunderland winning 3-1 at Goodison. Even so, Joe Royle's team are hoping to make a serious challenge for a place in Europe which should not be beyond them with Speed and Barmby added to the established attacking strength of Ferguson and Kanchelskis. Not that Everton found many early opportunities to attack, so eagerly did Derby press forward with Sturridge scuttling past defenders in search of space near goal. Derby play with three at the back, using McGrath in his old Aston Villa role, and quickly exploited the numerical superiority in the middle before Hinchcliffe started to move up on the left for Everton. One flick of Ferguson's head, which sent Branch behind the Derby defence in the 10th minute, showed that effective Everton could be on the break. This time Branch put the ball behind from a narrow angle, but the 18-year-old continues to impress. Ward and Sturridge, meanwhile, continued to worry Watson and Unsworth through their ability to find each other with quick passes. Asanovic's stealth and vision were always around in support and Derby several times found the younger talisman finding the target without actually exercising Southall. Apart from two speculative



My ball at the Baseball Ground... Everton's evergreen goalkeeper Neville Southall beats Derby's Ashley Ward to the punch. PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS HENNARD

long shots at the start of the match, little was seen of Kanchelskis during the opening half-hour. The dominance on the wings of Larssen and Chris Powell meant that Everton struggled to make headway on either flank. Just past the half-hour Ferguson's nod down to Branch found the younger talisman finding the target without actually exercising Southall. Apart from two speculative

far post but at least counted as one of rare scoring attempts achieved by Everton during the first 45 minutes. But with the head of Ferguson becoming more regularly involved in Everton's movements, Derby battled in vain to make more of their territorial advantage. After half-time, with both sides falling offside to a monotonous degree, the contest started to drift towards a

stalemate. Everton, however, were still having problems containing the pace of the Derby front pair, and Unsworth was cautioned for desperately hanging on to Ward as the striker strode past him. Derby would surely have gone ahead in the 55th minute had Asanovic not lost his composure at the crucial moment. Sturridge broke away on the left and after cutting into the penalty area saw an

intended shot ricochet off Watson straight to Asanovic, who was near the penalty spot with time and space to score. But the Croatian lifted his head and his shot flew over the bar. Derby County: Scott, Rowan, McGrath, Smith, Larssen, Flynn, Asanovic, Powell, C. Powell, Sturridge, Watson, Unsworth, Hinchcliffe, Kanchelskis, Parkinson, Speed, Barry, Ferguson, Branch. Referee: M. Reed (Birmingham).

stalemate. Everton, however, were still having problems containing the pace of the Derby front pair, and Unsworth was cautioned for desperately hanging on to Ward as the striker strode past him. Derby would surely have gone ahead in the 55th minute had Asanovic not lost his composure at the crucial moment. Sturridge broke away on the left and after cutting into the penalty area saw an

FA reprieves Notley, 18, pending drug treatment

CHARLTON Athletic's Jay Notley, who tested positive for a cocktail of drugs early last month, was yesterday given three months to sort himself out by an FA disciplinary committee which deferred passing sentence. "Jay Notley was given credit by the commission for his frank admission and has been asked to undergo a period of rehabilitation and counselling at an FA-approved centre," a statement read. He will not be allowed to play during the three months. Charlton's manager Alan Curbishley, who was present at the 2½-hour hearing, said: "I think it's a very sensible decision. They are asking him to have rehabilitation and they will wait for the reports before they decide whether further action they will take." After being tested at the London club's training ground by the mobile doping unit, but before the results were known to anybody, the 18-year-old midfielder admitted to Charlton officials that he had taken cannabis, cocaine and Ecstasy. Yesterday he told the commission that he had taken drugs at a party during the weekend before the Monday-morning test. Analysis presented by Professor David Cowan of the drugs control centre at King's College showed that the Ecstasy had been taken 12-24 hours before the test. Last season two more experienced players, Roger Stanislaus and Craig Whittington, were banned for a year and six months respectively for drug offences. "Jay's quite happy with the decision and so are we as a club," said Curbishley. "He didn't take the substances to enhance his performance and now we feel he should be left alone for rehabilitation. The FA have agreed with that. Notley, who was accompanied by his parents and Charlton's executive director Jonathan Fuller, presented his own case to the commission at Lancaster Gate. He left without comment. The Professional Footballers' Association meanwhile, is to hold its own inquiry into the crowd trouble in which Bristol Rovers players were attacked by Bristol City fans at Ashton Gate on Sunday. The FA, which has the match referee David Orr's report, has promised a full inquiry but is waiting to hear the Avon and Somerset police's version of events.

Weah is given six-match European ban

Uefa's strong punishment for the Milan striker's head-butting may discourage top English clubs from spending £10 million

GEORGE WEAH, Milan's Liberian striker, was yesterday banned for six European matches by Uefa for head-butting the Porto defender Jorge Costa. The punishment may well undermine any plans by Arsenal and other top Premiership clubs to sign the 1988 World Player of the Year for next season. Weah received a red card after his attack on Costa in the players' tunnel at Porto's Antas Stadium just

after the 1-1 Champions League draw on November 20. It was an incident which cost Weah with a broken nose and has put him out of action for several weeks. Weah subsequently claimed that Costa had racially abused him during both of the Italian champions' games against the Portuguese club. Weah was automatically banned for one game, Milan's final Champions League group match a

fortnight ago in which the 2-1 shock defeat by Rosenborg of Norway sent the five-times European Cup winners out of the competition. Yesterday he was handed the extended ban by Uefa's disciplinary committee. Although he has the option of an appeal - he has until midnight on Thursday to lodge it - his suspension for five more games may dissuade English clubs with European ambitions from sign-

ing a player for whom Milan, if they agree to sell, would want at least £10 million. Arsenal, whose manager Arsene Wenger discovered Weah and brought him from Africa to play for Paris St Germain, is believed to be heading the league or the highly talented striker. But next season Weah will not be available until the final Champions League group game or the second leg of the third round of the other two European competitions. Uefa, explaining its decision, said that any player adjudged to have commit-

ted "an act of serious violence" faced an automatic five-match European ban. "We have received only five, and the circumstances of the incident, made this case 'more serious'. But Weah's previous good character had counted in his favour, Uefa added. "The committee took into consideration George Weah's particularly gentlemanly conduct on the pitch," said its statement. "He has received only three yellow cards in Uefa competitions during the last five years, and was also granted a Fair Play Award by FIFA."

Anderson's offer shunned but Clark stays for time being

ONE of the consortiums bidding to take control of Nottingham Forest claimed yesterday that its offer to link up with a rival group led by the Monte Carlo-based millionaire Laurie Lewis had been turned down. Sandy Anderson, a Nottingham businessman, said that his bid would help the club's long-term success and well-being of the club but the offer had met with a cool response. Anderson's consortium has the backing of the board, and Anderson claims that its £13 million bid is 30 per cent higher than the rival offer, but Lewis's group, which contains the former Tottenham chairman Irving Scholar, is emerging as the favourite to get the go-ahead from shareholders at next month's emergency general meeting. There was some good news for the beleaguered club, though, when the manager Frank Clark, who was reported on Sunday to be looking to leave, announced he would be in charge for the game at Liverpool tonight. "A great deal of progress has been made in the last 24 to 36 hours which I feel could have been done quite a while ago," said Clark. "I do feel we are heading in the right direction to trying to get the issue sorted."

Pools Forecast

Table with columns for FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP, NATIONAL LEAGUE, and other football leagues, listing teams and their predicted outcomes.

Results

Table listing football match results from various leagues, including Premier League, Championship, and National League.

Soccer

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Derby 0, Everton 1. NATIONAL LEAGUE: Charlton 1, Bradford 0. TENNIS: Wimbledon 2, Flavia Pennetta 0. BASKETBALL: Detroit 90, Boston 82. ALPINE SKIING: World Cup, Bode Miller 1st.

Cricket

INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGERS: Great Britain 12, Pakistan 10. COUNTY CHAMPIONS: Essex 1st.

Ice Hockey

NHL: Dallas 3, Carolina 2. NHL: Dallas 3, Carolina 2.

Fixtures

FA CUP: Southampton v West Ham. FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Coventry v Liverpool.

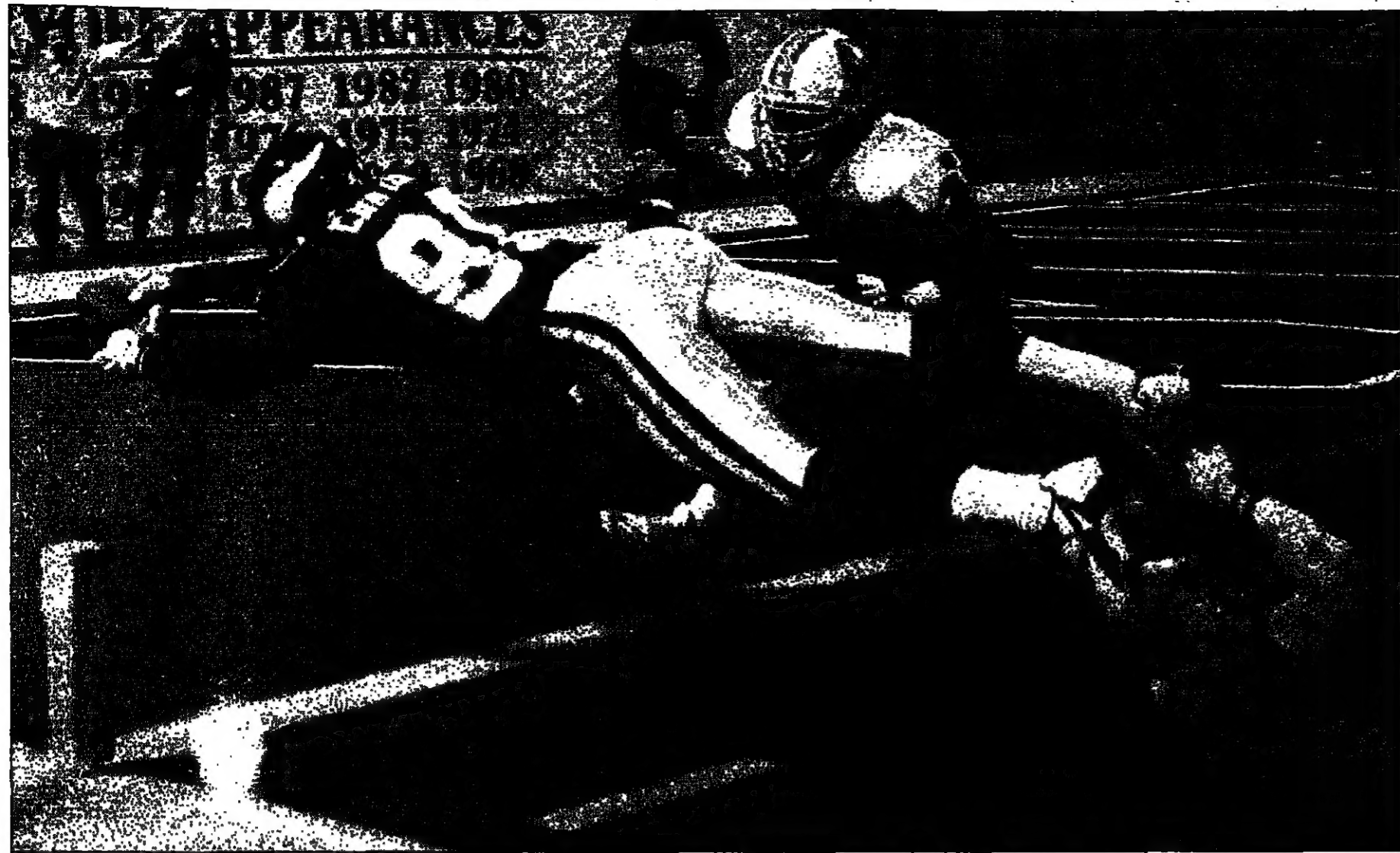
Rugby League

WARRINGTON: Warrington v Wakefield. ST HELENS: St Helens v Wigan.

Athletics

ROWING: British Rowing Federation. HARRIS: Harris v Warrington.

Handwritten signature or scribble at the bottom of the page.



Minnesota Vikings' Carter evades the challenge of Mayhew for a touchdown in the 21-10 win over Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Cowboys cut down Patriots to capture record fifth title

Mark Tran in New York on American football

WITH less than a week to go in San Francisco, Carolina, Green Bay, Minnesota, Philadelphia and Dallas have made the play-offs from the National Football Conference, the Cowboys taking the NFC East for a record fifth time by beating the New England Patriots 13-6 on Sunday.

The NFC has been victorious in the past 12 Super Bowls against the AFC. The Pittsburgh Steelers, winners of their previous 13 games at Three Rivers Stadium, were playing for a first-round bye but were stopped in their tracks when the San Francisco 49ers came to town on Sunday and won 25-15. The Steelers, last year's

Super Bowl finalists, slumped to a 16-point deficit in the first six minutes and never recovered. "You cannot put yourself in a 16-0 hole and fight your way out against a team of this calibre," said their coach Bill Cowher.

The 49ers, by defeating one of the fancied AFC teams, can still clinch their NFC West division provided they win against the Detroit Lions this week while the Steelers beat the Carolina Panthers for them.

The 49ers got an early break when the Steelers fumbled a punt return and San Francisco's Daryl Pricer smothered the ball at Pittsburgh's 16. Three plays later Steve Young, the 49ers' quarterback, found Jerry Rice for a four-yard touchdown. Rice finished with eight receptions for 63 yards and one touchdown.

Cricket

Irani injury a body blow for England

David Hopes in Bulawayo

ENGLAND's tour of Zimbabwe has all ready become a headache, but backache is something they are not prepared to tolerate. A determination to prevent a drift towards further disaster was indicated yesterday by their insistence that Ronnie Irani underwent an immediate scan on a back injury that could force his early return home.

The squad possesses such limited room for manoeuvre that it would be illogical to allow injured players much licence to recover without strengthening the party. Irani bowled six overs reasonably tidily on Sunday without ever looking threatening and complained again on back soreness after the match. England were unable to arrange a satisfactory scan in Bulawayo yesterday morning and, with the first Test only 48 hours away, they immediately switched their attention to Harare.

"We had to take the player at his word," said England's coach David Lloyd. "He declared himself 100 per cent fit for the one-day international but he still got a reaction after the match and we have to be concerned about that." "We are duty-bound to give him every opportunity to get things right but as the only all-rounder in the party he is in a pivotal position. That makes us anxious to make a decision as quickly as possible."

After the withdrawal of Dominic Cork because of marital difficulties three days before England left for Zimbabwe, Lord's Law dictated that the other key all-rounder in the squad should be the first to be laid low by injury. Robert Croft, the Glamorgan off-spinner, is likely to bat at No. 7 here. Lloyd added: "The batsmen do have competition for their places. If they do not do well there are lots of other players who are ready to step up, guys like Mark Butcher and Adam Hobbins." "We are telling the batsmen they must go out and dominate, but it's just lack of form at the moment; we can't hide the fact that we were poor in Sunday's match. Our lack of batting form is a problem but I don't think there is a lack of confidence or morale."

Lloyd ruled out the further possibility that Cork might rejoin the squad before they move on to New Zealand next month. Chris Silverwood's purposeful display on his international debut on Sunday should guarantee him a Test debut ahead of Caddick. Lloyd's praise of Silverwood's aggression contrasted with his barely concealed disappointment that Caddick has not to approach the best form. "I would like to be impressed," Lloyd said. He could hardly have coached it with more meaning.

MCC develops taste for a gherkin

AGHERKIN-shaped Amedia centre is to be built at Lord's after £4.3 million of the MCC membership voted in favour last night.

The world's first all-aluminium building is likely to be erected in a shipyard and will house, television, radio and newspaper media under one roof at the Nursery End. In the winter it will be used to train sports people - not only cricketers but also those in the media.

Boxing

Lewis hit by McCall arrest

LENNOX LEWIS's attempt to win back the vacant WBC heavy-weight title early next year is in doubt after his opponent Oliver McCall was charged with possession of marijuana in North Carolina and two months later with possession of marijuana and cocaine in Chicago. This month he was put on probation for 18 months after pleading guilty to possessing a controlled substance in Cook County.

McCall won the WBC title in 1994 when he knocked out Lewis in the second round. He successfully defended it against Larry Holmes in April 1995 before losing it to Frank Bruno five months later. His promoter, Don King, has been stripped of the right to stage the Lewis fight.

Rugby Union

Ashton in rift at Bath

Ian Millin

BRIAN ASHTON's future at Bath is in doubt, with the coach taking a week's paid holiday and playing no part in the build-up to this Saturday's Pilkington Cup fifth-round tie against London Irish.

Last week the 49-year-old Ashton handed in his resignation, less than six months after leaving his teaching job at King's School, Bruton and taking on the full-time post with England's champion club. Bath's captain Phil de Glanville returned to the city from England duty last Friday for an emergency meeting to try to solve the club's crisis.

At training yesterday morning, shocked players were told of Ashton's temporary departure by the director of rugby John Hall. Bath last night denied that Ashton was severing his six-year link with the club, and the coach himself said: "We haven't parted company. I've just taken a week off."

But Ashton has had an uneasy working relationship with Hall in recent weeks, and on the field Bath's reputation as England's premier club has suffered. They have lost three league games and been knocked out of the European Cup at the quarter-final stage after defeats at Pontypriad and Cardiff.

No sugar-daddy for the Scarlets

LANELLI RFC, one of the most famous names in world rugby, have an uncertain future after prospective financial backers failed to deliver a promised £1.5 million and left club chairman Stuart Gallacher with what amounts to a vote of no confidence at an egm next month.



No deal... caravan-park owner Mel Davies

When the club's members voted last July to authorise turning the club into a company and bringing in Jack Walker figures to meet the new demands of professionalism, they hoped they were following the road taken by the likes of Bath, Newcastle and Saracens.

But the headlong rush of the Scarlets to create Llanelli RFC Limited and embark on an aggressive recruitment drive on the basis of money that never materialised is widely seen in Wales as a salutary warning to other similarly placed clubs.

tee therefore consider that the negotiations are at an end and now feel free to seek alternative investments to ensure the future of the club." One surreal result of the financial deal's failure is that the directors of Llanelli RFC Limited were registered, in nominal form, as York Place Company Secretaries Limited and York Place Company Nominees Limited. Both those Leeds-based companies were formed as part of the bid brokered by a Pembrokeshire caravan-park owner, Mel Davies, and backed by an accountant, Brian Law.

The putative middleman, Davies, now says he is "completely disenchanted with the whole rugby scene" and that he and his partners do not understand that money is raised via hard-headed business deals, not philanthropy. "Too many at Llanelli want some sort of fairy godmother who will pay in millions of pounds and allow them to continue as they always did," he said. "Remember, this club was in financial difficulties before professionalism."

Ice Hockey

Durdle comes out of the cold

DARREN DURDLE is eligible to play for Great Britain, the International Ice Hockey Federation confirmed yesterday as preparations continued for tomorrow's crucial Olympic qualifier with Switzerland at Sheffield.

Durdle, the Canadian-born British passport-holder who plays for the Berlin side Eisbaren, had been left out of the side that defeated the Netherlands 8-2 on Thursday after Dutch officials queried his eligibility.

Sailing

Smith changes tack for £1m

PLAYER transfer has entered the world of sailing and, as in other professional sports, big fees are involved. When Lawrie Smith moved from the Swedish Team EF yesterday to the all-British World Sport Management Syndicate for the 1997-98 Whitbread Round the World Race, a substantial fee was involved, believed to be £1 million (£800,000), or the value of Smith's replacement, Paul Cayard.

Smith originally signed for the Whitbread with Team EF after an on-off protracted series of negotiations and only last month announced four of his core crew members who would sail on EF Language, the all-male boat of the Swedish team.

Smith, on the other hand, has taken the four crewmen announced in November, Adrian Stead, Steve Hayles, Neal McDonald and Gordon Maguire, with him to Silk Cut as well as the sail co-ordinator, Russell Pickett.

Sport in brief

Sports Politics

Wembley was last night preparing to celebrate its nomination as the £100 million home of Britain's new National Stadium. The official decision on the location for the nation's showpiece sporting venue is due to be announced by the Sports Council this morning.

Basketball

London's big two were paired with each other by their coaches in the 7-Up Trophy draw, made live on Radio 5 last night, writes Robert Pryce. Kevin Cadie, the London Towers coach drawing the teams to play the first leg at home, pulled out the Leopards; Billy Mims, the Leopards coach drawing the away teams, pulled out the Towers. The teams tie joint second in the Budweiser League.

Team talk

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Arsenal	05	Ipswich Town	18	Sheffield United	15
Aston Villa	11	Leeds United	03	Sheffield Wed.	14
Birm. City	34	Leicester City	35	Southampton	30
Bolton	21	Liverpool	04	Stoke City	30
Bristol City	38	Man. City	02	Sunderland	27
Bristol Rovers	34	Man. United	01	Tottenham Hot.	07
Burnley	31	Middlesbrough	28	West Ham	12
Chelsea	06	Milwall	29	Wimbledon	26
Coventry City	17	Newcastle Utd	16	Wolves	37
Derby County	28	Norwich City	16	Celtic	09
Everton	06	Nottm. Forest	13	Rangers	10
Hudd. Town	32	QPR	25		

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

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Scarlets deep in the red, page 15

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Finance Guardian

WALKER'S RICHES LURE SWEDISH COACH

Eriksson bound for Ewood

Rovers face long wait for arrival of new manager

Ian Ross

THE task of restoring Blackburn Rovers to a position of prominence in English football was yesterday handed to one of Europe's most respected coaches, Sven Goran Eriksson.

After many weeks of negotiation the Swede agreed to swap Genoa for Lancashire but it is still unclear when precisely he will leave his present club, Sampdoria.

It is believed that he has agreed a three-year contract worth £1 million a season, which would make him British football's highest-paid manager, and he is expected to be handed a transfer fund of about £20 million by Jack Walker.

Blackburn would like to see the 48-year-old Swede in place before the turn of the year, but Eriksson's sense of loyalty is such that they may well have to wait until next summer before officially welcoming him to Ewood Park.

As yesterday's announcement was being made at a hastily convened press conference, Eriksson was in Italy preparing his team for their Serie A fixture this weekend.

In a statement Blackburn said: "In an ideal world we would naturally have had the new manager here, but that is not possible. We did consider using a satellite link but this request was also politely turned down by his present employer."

Although Eriksson's contract begins on July 1 1997, he may arrive earlier than planned. Sampdoria's apparent lack of co-operation yesterday suggests they are unhappy with Eriksson's decision and that does hint at a possible early release. "If he is released before that date he would join us immediately," said Blackburn's chairman Robert Coar.

"I am pleased and honoured to be coming to Blackburn," said Eriksson. "I am not in a position to give interviews

about the next club I shall be working with; I can only comment on the club I am currently employed by."

Blackburn have been without a full-time manager since October 25 when Ray Harford stepped down 48 hours after his team had been eliminated from the Coca-Cola Cup by Second Division Stockport County.

In the interim the club's caretaker manager, Tony Parkes, has overseen something of a revival in fortunes but, after Saturday's defeat by Wimbledon, Blackburn are still only four places off the bottom of the Premiership.

Blackburn regard the signing of Eriksson as a major coup. "It is some time since Ray Harford left us but we were determined to make the right appointment," said Coar.

"We have secured the services of a man of vast experience at a number of top European clubs to underline our ambition to be both a leading club in the Premier League and to compete successfully on a regular basis in European competition."

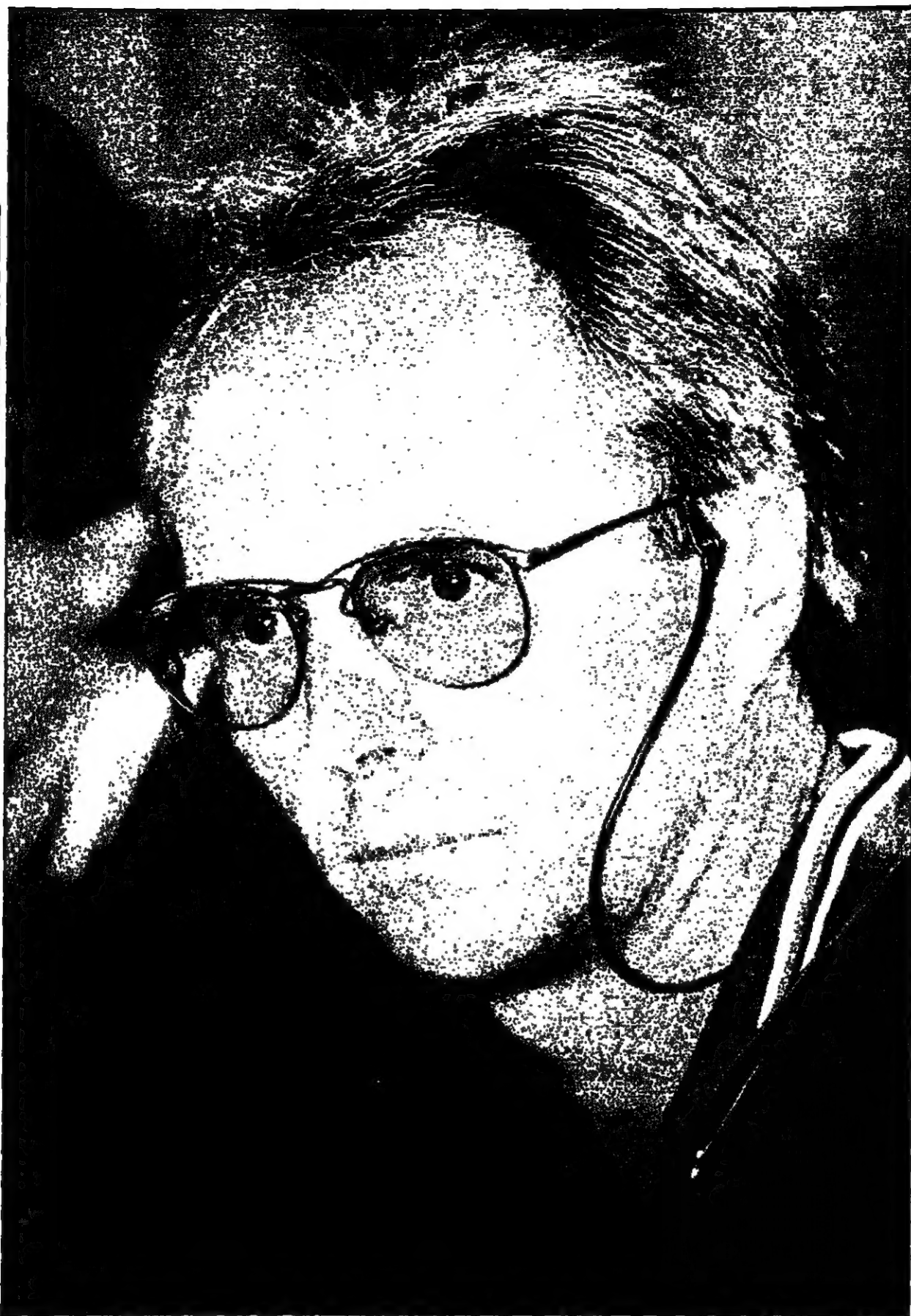
Coar said that he did not envisage any members of Blackburn's managerial staff losing their jobs as a consequence of the appointment.

Eriksson is the third major Continental figure to be placed in charge of a Premiership club, after the appointments of Ruud Gullit at Chelsea and Arsene Wenger at Arsenal.

Apart from Blackburn, Eriksson can count on at least one other English admirer in the Arsenal midfielder David Platt, who played under him at Sampdoria.

"I am sure Sven will prove a great success in England. He has proved himself to be a coach of the very highest calibre in Sweden, Italy and Portugal and will have a positive impact at Blackburn. The Rovers players will enjoy his training methods and will respect his exceptional tactical awareness."

Profile, page 14



Face of Blackburn's future... Sven Goran Eriksson, who is not due to take over until the summer. PHOTOGRAPH: SHALM BOTTLELL

Williams' legal imbroglio to run and run



Richard Williams

THE DECISION of the Italian authorities to issue charges of culpable homicide against Frank Williams and five others is good news only for the legal profession. *Avvocato* Giorgio Carmani, if there is such a chap, must be rubbing his hands.

For the rest of us, it casts doubt on the sport's unspoken contract between the men who build the cars and the men who drive them, an understanding of implicit risk. And it might just mean the end of Formula One racing in Italy. But the lawyers will be able to retire after this one.

Think of it this way. The technical analysis produced after more than a year's investigation into the possible causes of the accident that killed Ayrton Senna runs to 700 pages. It contains the detailed findings of scientists at Bologna University and the Italian aeronautical institute, guided by an ad hoc committee containing several distinguished figures.

What it apparently suggests is that a fast-minute weld in the steering column of Senna's Williams-Renault broke while he was taking the Tamburello curve on the seventh lap of the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix, sending him into a concrete wall at 131 mph. But Frank Williams can afford the best lawyers in the world, and he will do everything he can to prevent the court reaching the conclusion that a careless piece of work by one of his employees led to the death of the most famous and beloved racing driver of his era. So every word will be inspected, analysed, and tested for integrity as microscopically as if it were, well, the smallest widget on a Williams grand prix car.

On the face of it, this one looks like a cross between the OJ trial and the McDonald's libel case, with the star quality of one and the prolongation of the other. The Italian people are entitled to their legal system, but on this occasion they are perhaps not much to be envied.

Whether a trial can reach any sort of a satisfactory conclusion must be a matter for serious doubt. Thanks to the destruction of the car's black

box recorder in the accident most of the potentially relevant data is unavailable, and Senna's death has therefore been the subject of a great deal of speculation.

The proposed causes come in three types: the implausible, the possible, and the probable. In the first category comes the theory that the accident occurred as the result of an unforced error by the world's best driver on a corner presenting no challenge whatsoever.

The possible list includes the suggestion of a sudden instability caused by low tyre pressures. After an accident at the start of the race, the cars had been running behind the pace car and the rubber would have cooled, reducing the pressure significantly. Temperature and pressure are critical to the performance of F1 tyres — as we saw at the same circuit a year later, when Schumacher came out of the pits on cold tyres and flew off the track within half a lap.

The probable causes mostly revolve around the car's steering. The steering column had certainly been modified and it definitely snapped at some point, although it is hard to believe that metallurgists in Italy, or anywhere else, possess a machine capable of determining whether it broke before or during the impact with the wall.

The other rational suggestion concerns a possible failure of the car's power steering, then a relatively new feature. Such telemetry data as did survive gave some suggestion of an abnormality in the hydraulic system moments before the crash.

Actually, the longer all this goes on, the more seriously I begin to take the notion written off by everyone with the remotest claim to credibility — the idea that the driver made a mistake.

Let's think about it. This was Senna's third grand prix with his new team, in the new Williams FW16B. He had spun out of the Brazilian Grand Prix while trying to catch Schumacher. That was a misjudgment, all right, compounded by an unpredictable car. At Adelaide, in the second race, he had gone no further than the first corner before being punted off by another driver. The FW16B was still causing problems, and Senna was in a state of some anxiety.

But, as Frank Williams must know, one cannot advance this theory without incurring the martial wrath of the legions of Senna-worshippers. And it is, of course, the one theory that can never, ever be proved.

Jones pays heavy price for weekend paper talk

Neil Robinson

VINNIE JONES was £6,000 out of pocket yesterday after his Wimbledon team-mates failed to see the funny side of his weekend newspaper article which poked fun at them.

The midfielder has been fined a week's wages, estimated at £4,000, by the club. He also agreed to donate the £2,000 he earned from the Sun to the players' pool, and personally apologised to every player, the chairman Sam Hammam and manager Joe Kinnear.

Hammam said that, as captain, Jones should have shown better judgment. "Wimbledon play with 10 men and Vinnie Jones," he said. "In many respects they are ahead of him from a technical and footballing angle. But what Vinnie provides is leadership and the

respect of his team-mates. Without this he will have nothing left."

"Just like Samson whose power came from his hair, Vinnie's comes from having the respect of his team-mates. Lose that and lose it all."

In the article, headlined "Jones' laughalng guide to the Crazy Gang", Wimbledon's captain rated his colleagues' drinking, catwalk and "rock" qualities. He accused Andy Clarke of being "ugly" and "one brick short of a full hod". Dean Holdsworth of being vain, and said Oyvind Leonhardsen was "terminally boring".

Jones, whose past literary efforts have also landed him in trouble, maintains that his remarks were meant in jest. "It was supposed to be a joke, a Christ-massy, pull-the-leg sort of stunt, but it went completely wrong."

"I'm sure that at the moment people were looking for something to go wrong after 19 games unbeaten. You've had your wish. I'm sorry it was me. I thought the club were going to fine me a lot more and I had prepared myself for that."

"But the boys have had a meeting. I apologised to them individually, especially Dean Holdsworth and Andy Clarke. I'm particularly upset that I've upset their families."

"I've put my hands up. Everybody knows the context it was supposed to have been in but it hasn't been taken that way. Therefore I'm the leader of these boys, I live by the sword and I'll die by it."

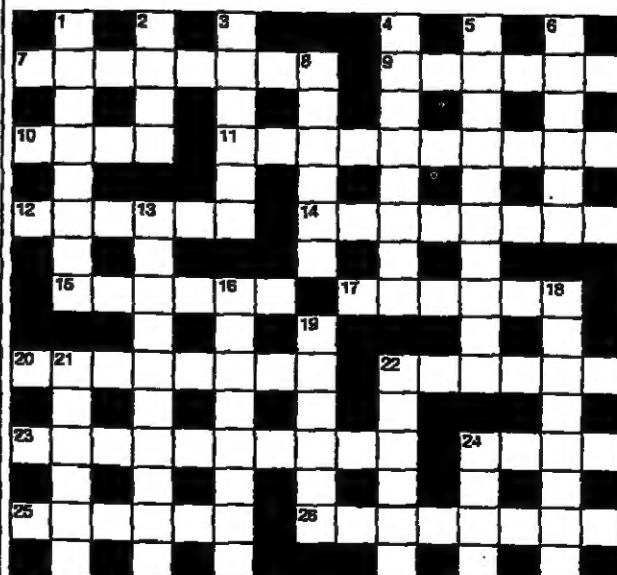
But he retains the captaincy. He added: "It's not a football matter. You never stop learning lessons; I'm facing up to it. These things happen in life and they make you stronger."

The department's London HQ in Queen Anne's Gate was described as "a dinosaur... a monstrosity... ugly, graceless, top-heavy and lacking in any kind of symmetry". Much the same might be said of the department itself.
Matthew Engel on the Home Office

G2 cover story

Guardian Crossword No 20,838

Set by Gemini

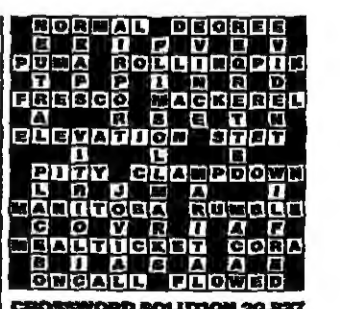


Across

- 7 Long spell in bed in a stupefied state (8)
- 9 The girl to give the old man a drink (5)
- 10 Let rip! (4)
- 11 This ship's going to open up a lead (10)
- 12 Object to rush from the platform (5)
- 14 The pipes are sounding (8)
- 15 Find another opener for a fruit drink (8)
- 17 Out from the country north-bound (8)
- 20 Avoid going back to school to complete the timetable (8)
- 22 Once seated, stayed in the audience (6)
- 23 View right round taken in by one panning (10)

Down

- 1 Takes the lead with a boundary say (8)
- 2 PM for a short time during the depression (4)
- 3 Halfway through dry up (5)
- 4 Start to work in the house (in Buxton) (8)
- 5 A basis for cutting money awarded to directors (10)
- 6 One perhaps with false hair could be a baldpate (6)
- 8 To exercise take a walk in open country (6)
- 13 Marshal present to take charge of show (10)
- 16 An obstruction in the course of the game (8)

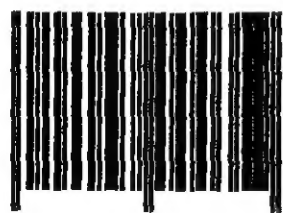


CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,837

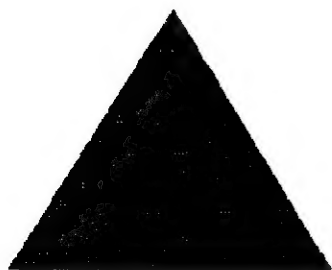
- 18 Might Fry in these places have reformed the nicks? (8)
- 19 On reflection it appears sinister (6)
- 21 Dog litter brought under control (6)
- 22 Scatter and seek cover (6)
- 24 Prior in The Canterbury Tales — or Priors? (4)

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